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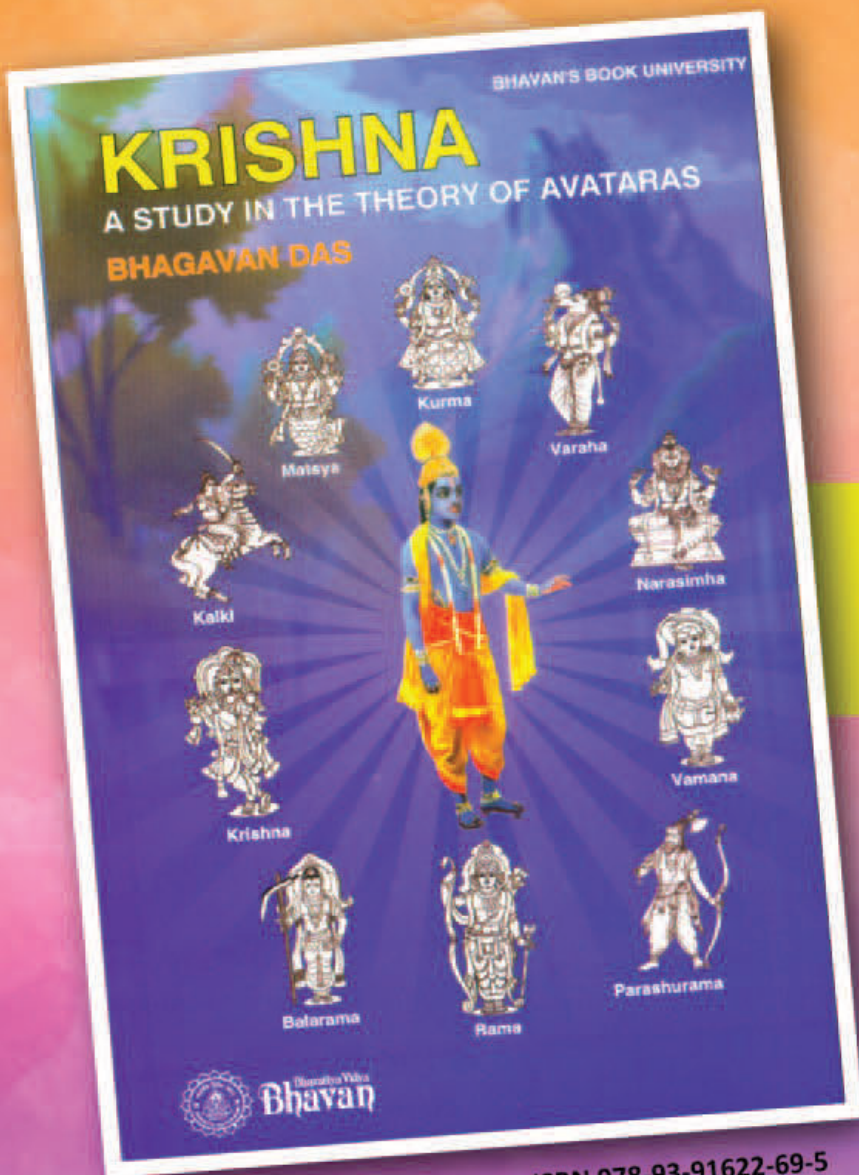
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KRISHNA

A Study in the Theory of Avataras

Bhagavan Das



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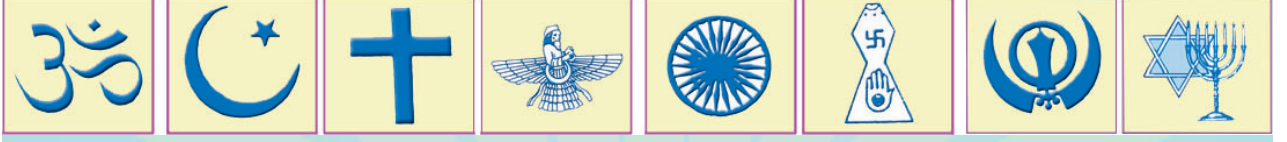
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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः

aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvatah

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side –Rigveda, I-89-i



SAGE SPEAK



“There is nothing more dreadful than the habit of doubt. Doubt separates people. It is a poison that disintegrates friendships and breaks up pleasant relations. It is a thorn that irritates and hurts; it is a sword that kills.”

—**Gautam Buddha**



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Study of Celestial Celebrations

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FLASHBACK

Sanskrit and Social Order

Swami Vivekananda

We must bring out the gems of spirituality that are stored up in our books, and in the possession of a few only, hidden, as it were, in monasteries and in forests. We must bring the knowledge out of them, not only from the hands where it is hidden, but from the still more inaccessible chest, the language in which it is preserved, the incrustation of centuries of Sanskrit words. In one word, I want to make them popular. I want to bring out these ideals and let them be the common property of all, of everyone in India.

Ideas must be taught in the language of the people; at the same time, Sanskrit education must go on along with it, because the very sound of Sanskrit words give prestige and power and strength to the race.

The attempts of the great Ramanuja, Chaitanya and Kabir to raise the lower classes of India show that marvellous results were attained during the lifetime of those great prophets; yet the later failures have to be explained, and cause shown why the effect of their teachings stopped almost within a century of the passing

away of these great Masters. The secret is here. They raised the lower classes; they had all the wish that these should come up, but they did not apply their energies to the spreading of the Sanskrit language among the masses. Even the great Buddha made one false step when he stopped the Sanskrit languages from being studied by the masses. He wanted rapid and immediate results, and translated and preached in the language of the day, Pali. That was grand, he spoke in the language of the people, and the people understood him. That was great; it spread the ideas quickly and made them reach far and wide, but, along with that, Sanskrit ought to have been spread. Knowledge came but the prestige was not there; culture was not there.

It is culture that withstands shocks, not a simple mass of knowledge. You can put a mass of knowledge into the world, but that will not do it much good. There must come culture into the blood. We all know in modern times, of nations which have masses of knowledge, but what of them? They are like tigers, they are like savages, because culture

is not there. Knowledge is only skin-deep, as civilisation is, and a little scratch brings out the old savage. Such things happen; this is the danger.

Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them ideas. They will get information, but something more is necessary; give them culture. Until you give them that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses. There will be another caste created, having the advantage of the Sanskrit language, which will quickly get above the rest and rule them all the same. The only safety to men who belong to the lower castes, the only way to raise your condition, is to study Sanskrit, and all this fighting, fretting and frothing against the higher castes is in vain, it does no good, and it creates fight and quarrel, and this race, unfortunately already divided, is going to be divided more and more. The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education, which is the strength of the higher castes. That done, you have what you want. ●

[Courtesy: Ramakrishna Ashram].



Kulapativani

Mother Tongue

Social communication and creative art were only possible through the medium of the mother tongue. Other languages were like step-mothers; they would not give form to the true vision of beauty which a literary man might have. A national language, and the bringing about of a commonwealth of literatures fell within the province of distribution, whereas creative art was a matter of production and could only be done through the

medium of the mother tongue. Facility of distribution might stimulate production; and the exigencies of distribution might determine the nature of production; but the true secret of production was the richness and fertility of soil, of the mother tongue. Whoever served his own language would truly serve the commonwealth of literature; whoever helped to build up a national language and literature, would ensure the growth of his mother tongue. ●



Point to Ponder

Mysticism, Nature & Morality

What is mysticism? Some believe there is such a thing, while others do not. Modern positivists and naturalists have denied mysticism by being utterly indifferent to it.

Mysticism is that which is beyond secular human comprehension and above human intelligence. It triumphs over logic and human reasoning or rationalisation. It is and can only be understood, as some claim, by experience and not by experiment. Such a description of mysticism is not accepted by all and the

general understanding is that it is contrary to what is natural. Mysticism is incompatible with enlightenment and should have no place in any age of progress and science.

Some go so far as to condemn mysticism as an illusion, a fantasy or a type of superstition that is embraced by feeble-minded weaklings, misfits or escapists. There is no mystery under the sun; everything can be explained by science, logic and rationalisation.

Mysticism is a relic of the ancient past and the modern progressive man must have some

of it. There are those who believe in mysticism and who claim to know it, and there are those who seek it. What do they have to say about this subject? Those who disbelieve in mysticism have closed the door to any further discussion, which, according to them, is futile.

On the other hand, according to those who believe in mysticism, the whole world is full of mystery and behind almost every phenomenon, there is a mystery. Who knows when a person will be born and when he (or she) will die! If one stops and wonders how, for billions and billions of years, 'he' knew nothing, was nothing, and had no existence at all—how is transformation possible from non-existence to existence, from non-being to being, when there was no potentiality in the former?

Furthermore, we do not know the construction of our own bodies and even medical doctors do not know everything. No doctor has yet known the exact location of life in a man's body. Whether it is in the flesh, in the bones, beneath the skin, or inside each cell—no one knows. When a man is choked to death, he has everything complete in bodily terms, but he has no life. He is

dead. So when a man is dead, where is his life?

What about when a man is sound asleep? He knows nothing but he has life. Can the same life reside in different bodies? No one is completely sure of the answer!

We are more than just flesh and bone, teeth and hair. What are we? Who are you? Who am I?

We are told that there are more electrical circuits and more electronic equivalents in a single human brain than in all the radio and television stations of the whole world put together.

Scientists may have miscalculated, people may be in the habit of exaggeration, but who can deny the amazing intricacy and complexity of the human brain, which cannot understand itself? With all the brains in the world, humans cannot make another human brain, nor can they fully understand the workings of a human brain, behind which there is a mind that is non-material.

If the whole universe is a creation of nature then nature is truly a great mystery. Indeed, mysticism and nature are inseparable, for nature is mysterious, and in its entirety, surpasses all our understanding! ●

All Life is One

M. K. Gandhi

Kinship with All

My ethics not only permit me to claim but require me to own kinship with not merely the ape but the horse and the sheep, the lion and the leopard, the snake and the scorpion. But these kinsfolk need not regard themselves in the same way.

The hard ethics which rule my life and I hold, ought to rule that of every man and woman, imposes this unilateral obligation upon us. And it is so imposed because man alone is made in the image of God. That some of us do not recognise that status of ours makes no difference, except that then we do not get the benefit of the status,

even as a lion brought up in the company of sheep may not know his own status and, therefore, does not receive its benefits; but it belongs to him nevertheless, and, the moment he realises it, he begins to exercise his dominion over the sheep. But no sheep masquerading as a lion can ever attain the leonine status.

And, to prove the proposition that man is made in the image of God, it is surely unnecessary to show that all men admittedly exhibit that image in their own persons. It is enough to show that one man at least has done so. And, will it be denied that the great religious teachers of mankind

have exhibited the image of God in their own persons?

I believe myself to be saturated with *ahimsa* (non-violence). *Ahimsa* and Truth are as my two lungs. I cannot live without them. But I see every moment, with more and more clarity, the immense power of *ahimsa* and the littleness of man.

Imperfect Non-violence

Even the forest-dweller cannot be entirely free from violence, in spite of his limitless compassion. With every breath, he commits a certain amount of violence. The body itself is a house of slaughter, and, therefore, *Moksha* and Eternal Bliss consist in perfect deliverance from the body, and,

therefore, all pleasure, save the joy of *Moksha*, is evanescent, imperfect. That being the case, we have to drink, in daily life, many a bitter draught of violence.

All life in the flesh exists by some *himsa* (violence). Hence, the highest religion has been defined by a negative word, *ahimsa*. The world is bound in a chain of destruction. In other words, *himsa* is an inherent necessity for life in the body. That is why, a votary of *ahimsa* always prays for ultimate deliverance from the bondage of flesh.

I am painfully aware of the fact that my desire to continue life in the body involves me in constant *himsa*. That is why I am becoming



growingly indifferent to this physical body of mine. For instance, I know that, in the act of respiration, I destroy innumerable invisible germs floating in the air. But I do not stop breathing. The consumption of vegetables involves *himsa*, but I find that I cannot give them up.

Again, there is *himsa* in the use of antiseptics, yet I cannot bring myself to discard the use of disinfectants like kerosene, etc., to rid myself of the mosquito pest and the like. I suffer snakes to be killed in the ashram when it is impossible to catch them and put them out of harm's way. I even tolerate the use of the stick to drive the bullocks in the ashram.

Thus, there is no end to *himsa* which I directly commit... If, as a result of this humble confession of mine, friends choose to give me up as lost, I would be sorry, but nothing will induce me to try to conceal my imperfections in the practice of *ahimsa*. All I claim for myself is that I am ceaselessly trying to understand the implications of great ideals like *ahimsa* and to practise them in thought, word and deed, and that not without a certain measure of success as I think. But I know that

I have a long distance yet to cover in this direction.

Vivisection

I am not opposed to the progress of science as such. On the contrary, the scientific spirit of the West commands my admiration and, if that admiration is qualified, it is because the scientist of the West takes no note of God's lower creation. I abhor vivisection with my whole soul. I detest the unpardonable slaughter of innocent life in the name of science and so-called humanity, and all the scientific discoveries stained with innocent blood I count as of no consequence.

If the circulation of blood theory could not have been discovered without vivisection, the human kind could well have done without it. And I see the day clearly dawning when the honest scientist of the West will put limitations upon the present methods of pursuing knowledge.

Lower Order

Future measurements will take note, not merely of the human family but of all that lives, and even as we are slowly but surely discovering that it is an error to suppose that Hindus can thrive

upon the degradation of a fifth of themselves or that peoples of the West can rise or live upon the exploitation and degradation of the Eastern and African nations, so shall we realise in the fullness of time that our dominion over the low order of creation is not for their slaughter, but for their benefit with ours. For I am as certain that they are endowed with a soul as I am.

The further march of civilisation seems to employ increasing domination of man over beast, together with a growingly humane method of using them. There are three schools of humanitarians. One believes in replacing animal power by the use of any other. Another believes in treating animals as fellow-beings and making such use of these as a brotherly spirit will permit. The third will not make use of lower animals for man's selfish purpose, but will employ instead one's own power and that of fellow-beings to the extent that the latter give intelligent and willing use. I belong to the third school.

Mercy Killing

I cannot for a moment bear to see a dog, or for that matter, any other living being, helplessly suffer

the torture of a slow death. I do not kill a human being thus circumstanced because I have more hopeful remedies. I should kill a dog similarly situated, because in its case I am without a remedy. Should my child be attacked by rabies and there was no hopeful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life.

Fatalism has its limits. We leave things to fate after exhausting all the remedies. One of the remedies and the final one to relieve the agony of a tortured child is to take his life.

I would not kill a human being for protecting a cow, as I will not kill a cow for saving a human life, be it ever so precious.

To my mind, the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being. I should be unwilling to take the life of a lamb for the sake of the human body. I hold that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man.

Problem of Venomous Beasts

I do not want to live at the cost of the life of even a snake. I should let him bite me to death rather than kill him, but it is likely that if God puts me to that cruel test and

permits a snake to assault me, I may not have the courage to die, but that the beast in me may assert itself and I may seek to kill the snake in defending this perishable body.

I admit that my belief has not become so incarnate in me as to warrant my stating emphatically that I have shed all fear of snakes so as to befriend them as I would like to be able to. It is my implicit belief that snakes, tigers, etc., are God's answer to the poisonous, wicked, evil thoughts we harbour....

I believe that all life is one. Thoughts take definite forms. Tigers and snakes have kinship with us. They are a warning to us to avoid harbouring evil, wicked, lustful thoughts. If I want to rid the earth of venomous beasts and reptiles, I must rid myself of all venomous thoughts. I shall not do so if, in my impatient ignorance and in my desire to prolong the existence of the body, I seek to kill the so-called venomous beasts and reptiles. If, in not seeking to defend myself against such noxious animals, I die then I should rise again, a better and fuller man. With that faith in me, how should I seek to kill a fellow-being in a snake?

...We are living in the midst of death, trying to grope our way to Truth. Perhaps it is as well that we are beset with danger at every point in our life, for, in spite of our knowledge of the danger and of our precarious existence, our indifference to the Source of all life is excelled only by our amazing arrogance.

....My intellect rebels against the destruction of any life in any shape whatsoever. But my heart is not strong enough to befriend these creatures which, experience has shown, are destructive. The language of convincing confidence, which comes from actual experience, fails me, and it will continue to do so, so long as I am cowardly enough to fear snakes, tigers and the like.

I verily believe that man's habit of killing man on the slightest pretext has darkened his reason and he gives himself liberties with other kinds of life, which he would shudder to take if he really believed that God was a God of Love and Mercy. Anyway, though for the fear of death I may kill tigers, snakes, fleas, mosquitoes and the like, I ever pray for illumination that will shed all fear of death and thus refusing to take life, know the better way, for:

Taught by the power that pities me, I learn to pity them.

Highest Ideal

My non-violence is not merely kindness to all living creatures. The emphasis laid on the sacredness of sub-human life in Jainism is understandable. But that can never mean that one is to be kind to this life in preference to human life. While writing about the sacredness of such life, I take it that the sacredness of human life has been taken for granted. The former has been over-emphasised. And while putting it into practice, the idea has undergone distortion. For instance, there are many who derive complete satisfaction in feeding ants. It would appear that the theory has become a wooden, lifeless dogma. Hypocrisy and distortion are currently passing under the name of religion.

Ahimsa is the highest ideal. It is meant for the brave, never the cowardly. To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and non-violent is sheer self-deception.

Doctrine of Non-Killing

My *ahimsa* is my own. I am not able to accept in its entirety the doctrine of non-killing of

animals. I have no feeling in me to save the life of these animals who devour or cause hurt to man. I consider it wrong to help in the increase of their progeny. Therefore, I will not feed ants, monkeys or dogs. I will never sacrifice a man's life in order to save theirs.

Thinking along these lines, I have come to the conclusion that to do away with monkeys where they have become a menace to the well-being of man is pardonable. Such killing becomes a duty. The question may arise as to why this rule should not also apply to human beings. It cannot because however bad, they are as we are. Unlike the animal, God has given man the faculty of reason.

True *ahimsa* demands that if we must save the society as well as ourselves from the mischief of monkeys and the like, we have to kill them. The general rule is that we must avoid violence to the utmost extent possible. Non-violence for the society is necessarily different from that for the individual. One living apart from society may defy all precautions, not so society as such. ●

The Art of Defeating Fate

Dr. P. Raja

Defeating Fate! Is Fate our slave that it will dance to our tunes? It is always our master. The English poet John Dryden too had asserted the same in the form of a poem:

‘Tis Fate that flings the dice,
And as she flings
Of Kings makes peasants,
And of peasants kings.

That is one view, however some folk tales take a different view of Fate.

This brings to mind a short story from cowboy folklore that highlights the idea of defeating Fate. The story

is about a mason who is returning home with his weekly wages. At an unexpected moment, he came face to face with an armed plunderer. “Your money or your life,” threatened the bully. The mason humbly replied, “Take my money and leave me to my wife and children. But before you go away, do me a favour. Shoot a bullet through my hat so as to convince my wife that I was robbed.”

The robber did as requested. The mason said, “Put more bullets... My wife should not take me for a coward. Let us make it look as if I ran into a gang of robbers.”

The robber obliged the mason and put more holes through the hat. Finally, he said, “No more holes. I am out of bullets.” The mason, in his stentorian voice, said, “Ha... That is what I wanted to hear from you. Now hand me back my money. You will have to give me some more for battering my hat. If not, I will thrash you to death.” He then raised his clinched fist and threatened him. The poor robber threw down the money and ran for his life.

This tale shows us that if you want to defeat Fate, you have to first face it and get rid of your fears. Fate came to the mason in the form of a robber. But look at how he drove it away with his presence of mind. Kudos to the mason!

Once, St. Francis of Assisi visited the Sultan of Egypt. Eager to insult the Saint, the Sultan laid a trap for him. He ordered a carpet designed with crosses to be spread where the Saint had to stand before the Sultan, who schemed: “If he walks on it, I shall accuse him of insulting his God, if he does not, I shall accuse him of insulting me.”

The Saint’s vigilant eyes did not fail to notice the crosses that covered the carpet. Yet he trod on it for he didn’t want to show disrespect towards the Sultan. But the Sultan,

awaiting such an opportunity, accused the Saint of insulting his God.

Without a moment’s hesitation, the saint said, “Our Lord died between two thieves who were also hanged on crosses. We Christians have the true cross. But the crosses of the thieves we leave to you and these I am not ashamed to tread on.”

We cannot but admire St. Francis’ presence of mind. Seeking danger is folly. But however cautious we may be, we cannot expect to pass through life without occasionally being in some sort of danger. And when we are in danger, we should muster up courage and meet it firmly and calmly just like the young boy David who faced the giant Goliath.

When we are in danger, what really confounds us is fear. We are unable to do anything for our own protection or relief. Say, for example, our clothes catch fire. Fear grips us. We panic. Fear drives our common sense away. We rush here and there like the wind, unwittingly allowing the fire to spread. As a result, our clothes burn very quickly and soon scorch the body. We may even get killed. But the chances of such a tragedy happening are lower if we act with prudence.

In such a precarious situation, all we have to do is think clearly. What best can be done to escape harm? By throwing ourselves on the floor and rolling there or by wrapping a carpet closely around ourselves, we can instantly extinguish the flames.

But how many of us avoid panicking during such moments and instead end up doing all those things that are unwarranted? When fear rules the mind, it banishes our prudence and common sense. It is as if we have no choice but to yield to so-called Fate. Yet, some remain calm and watchful so as to be able to escape the impending disaster. This is known as preserving our presence of mind—a quality that is always admirable.

It is not that we do not have presence of mind. But fear is a predominant emotion that easily overwhelms all other emotions. And when fear spreads its tentacles, only one in a thousand can escape from its clutches by being prudent. Perhaps that is why we admire in others what we lack in ourselves.

Life creates situations, both friendly and unfriendly. It is only the unfriendly ones that teach us lessons. They are our critics without whom we would never know our worth. When the situation is quite critical, we need presence of mind to wriggle our way out of the web woven by the spider of Fate.

Here is a great story of a man on whose doors unfriendly Fate knocked twice to put him into the



ever-gaping mouth of Death. But with his presence of mind, he was able to pull himself out from the jaws of Death!

A court jester, in an attempt to pull the king out of his sober mood, made a joke about the queen. But the king found the joke insulting. He decided to punish the jester with death for the dig he had made on his spouse. The next morning, the jester was brought to the court. As arranged earlier, a menial brought in a cur.

“For all that you have said about my queen, I can do no better than treat you like a cur,” began the king, still in an angry mood. He continued, “You can kill this cur in any manner you like. And you will be killed in the same way.”

“To compare me to a street dog is more than punishment enough, my lord. When you have already sentenced me to death, why do this to me?” asked the jester.

“Shut up and act,” roared the king.

The jester looked at the poor cur destined to die in his hands. He bent down, held the cur by its tail tightly with both his hands, raised the dog above his head and brought it down to the floor with such great force that the animal died after letting out a sharp yell.

The king had to gulp down the spittle that had collected in his mouth. He forgave the jester for his presence of mind, with a warning that he would not be spared the next time he were to repeat such an offence.

Months passed. The jester was very careful in his handling of words. But during one unexpected moment, the king caught him saying something inappropriate. It was just a slip of the tongue on the jester’s part. But then that is the power of words. Words can wound or cause anger. Words can console. Words can kill as well as bring us back to life. The poor jester, having tempted Fate, was dragged to the court. The king, without wasting time on any sort of prelude, said abruptly, “Choose how you want to die.”

The jester stood flabbergasted.

“You can choose to die in any manner you like. The choice is yours. Your last wish, that is your choice of death, will be granted,” promised the king.

“My lord! Now that you have promised not to go back on your word, let me tell you my last wish,” said the jester.

“Yes, go ahead. How would you like to die?” asked the king.

The jester replied, “Your Majesty, I would like to die of old age!” ●

Study of Celestial Celebrations

Geetha Srinivasan

Right from Grade 6 or 7, T. B. Bharathi grew up watching her father drawing some squares and writing a few letters in those boxes. At times, to keep her occupied, he would ask her to draw these boxes. Aware of her curious nature, her father started teaching her right from the basics—from zodiac signs to the nine planets—and tried to correlate it to her knowledge of geography. Then, he taught her about *dasha*, *antardasha* and how to calculate the movement of each planet to the extent of being able to cast a horoscope. Thus, she

slowly became a disciple of her father in astrology.

With an M.A. (Edu) from Indira Gandhi National University; PGDEMA from Indira Gandhi National Open University; B.Ed. from Indira Gandhi National Open University; M.Phil. (History) from Madurai Kamraj University, Madurai; M.A. (History) from Annamalai University, Chennai; B.A. (History, Sociology) from Sri Venkateshwara College, South Campus, Delhi University, Bharathi started her career as a teacher. Having an extensive experience for over three decades of teaching

social sciences in various schools and colleges, presently, she has been working as the Founder Principal of LRG public School, Hindupura.

Utilising her potential of communication, teaching and persuasive skills in a competent manner, she has been striving hard in career development and the institutional growth of the organisation she heads as the principal. Apart from her untiring services rendered as an educationist par excellence, Bharathi is also pursuing her passion in astrology, the knowledge of which has been gifted to her by her very first guru—her father, late Bukkarayasamudram Sreenivasacharlu.

Talking about a recent spectacular celestial event, Bharathi says, “Astrology rules on astronomical calculations for accuracy. Planetary positions, eclipses and other celestial events must be determined scientifically to interpret them astrologically. In ancient civilisations (e.g. Indian, Greek and Babylonian), astrology and astronomy were closely intertwined. *Rishis* and scholars like Valmiki and Vyasa used celestial observations for both scientific and spiritual purposes. Over time,



astronomy became a rigorous science while astrology remained a mere practice of belief.

The planetary parade from January 25, 2025, to February 21, 2025, is purely considered an astronomical phenomenon with no physical influence on the Earth. But for astrologers, this is considered quite significant as this is a rare gathering of important, or rather highly influential planets—Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, and two normal planets—Uranus and Neptune. As their energies combine, their influence amplifies, thus creating a powerful moment that may cause significant shifts in global events or societal changes. It also may herald a period of

transformation. For example, the grand conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in 2020 was interpreted as a

beginning of new era focusing on technological advancements as it occurred in the airy sign Aquarius.”

Excerpts from an interview with T. B. Bharathi

What is astrology?

Astrology is a combination of science cum art—art of predicting the future to some extent based on settings of the past. But that does not mean that it is completely an art. It has got its own mathematical calculations and its own reasoning like science. Many people have called it a pseudo-science. They have mistaken it as a science, but I would say it is science cum art. The same horoscope, one may foresee in some way, the other foresees in other way. Prediction is an art.

Hence, astrology is science and art.

Not all people, just by obtaining a degree, can predict. Predictions of only a few people who have *vak-shuddhi* (pure speech) and those who have not commercialised it—only such selflessly made predictions will come true.

How is astrology different from astronomy?

Astrology speaks about the twelve zodiac signs, stars and the nine planets. We call them all stars,



even the astronomical planets. We consider the influence of Sun, Moon, Mars and other celestial bodies. Sun is the father of all the planets, centre of all the planets in the horoscope. Astrology is the study of the influence of these astronomical bodies on human life, just as the five elements of nature. Though the distance between these may be some light-years, they still have an influence over the life on earth. That is how astronomy and astrology are related. But both are not one and the same.

Does astrology have scientific validity?

The scientific validity of astrology is still under question. For example, if we ask a small child, “Can you see air, touch and pocket it?” he will laugh at us. A layman may or may not believe it. Only those who have read astrology—the particular art of astrology—can understand. That is the truth. Fifty percent of the population consider it a pseudo-science. In reality, it is an amalgamation of science and art. Here, you have many mathematical calculations. When we cast a horoscope, we have to do all these calculations. The

movement of Mars for example has a proper calculation which is fixed. Definitely it is in the scientific form. The *dasha* of Mars is for seven years and everywhere it is same—there is no change, it is unquestionable. The *dasha* of the Moon is ten years. To figure out the *anhardasha*, there is a calculation also. It is a mathematical science, and at the same time, this is an art as well.

What is the right time for predicting?

Astrological predictions, as per my father who is my guru, cannot be done at any time and every time. Only after a *puja*, when your mind is free of all sorts of tensions, can the calculations be done. The prediction part has to be done very carefully. It can happen only with the blessings of the divine. Sometimes I have seen my father, while predicting, becoming confused. However, the next day after the *puja*, when he sits down for a prediction, he manages to get an answer.

Tell us about the significance of astrological predictions.

Firstly, predictions cannot change our life. Just by going to an



astrologer, we cannot be rid of things that are destined to happen. What can an astrologer do—he/she can give a caution, can alert and mentally prepare the person seeking help. Maybe, by the good deeds that we keep doing, the intensity might reduce.

How authentic are astrological predictions?

The authenticity depends on the one who predicts, not the one who holds a degree nor the one who has commercialised it. Nowadays, computerised horoscopes are in vogue, but we have learned manually how to calculate the *rasi chakram*, *navamsi chakram*, and how to calculate the *dasha*,

antardasha, etc. Calculation is the scientific part; when the prediction comes, that is artistic divinity. While predicting, we will have intuitions.

Many are dismissing astrology as superstitious belief. What is your say on this?

It is not at all superstition, because superstition is something which has no scientific base, no reasoning—that is superstition. But here, there is proper reasoning, there is calculation, so it is not superstition. Few people might have consulted a wrong predictor. Those predictions might not have come true in their life. Then they have discarded it and have lost total belief in astrology.

Where has it originated from?

It did not originate in recent times. Even in the *Ramayana*, when Vasista fixed the *muhurtham* for the marriage of Rama, it is very clearly mentioned. That means that these predictions date back to the times of our epics like *Ramayana*. The origin is from Vedic literature times. It is called *jyothisha shastram*. *Shastram* means science. Among all the *shad* (six) *shastras* that we have, astrology is also considered as one of the sciences. And this was taught even in our Nalanda University and Takshashila University.

Does astrology hold well in this era of nanotechnology?

In any era and any period, it strongly depends on the person who predicts. When it gets commercialised, the beauty, validity and sanctity of it is buried. The intention is very important.

Tell us about one astrological prediction in history that came true.

Here I will narrate the story that my father told me. When I was a child, I expressed my curiosity regarding the predictions. Then

he narrated the story of Varaha-Mihira, one of the famous author of astrological books, from the 10th century during the Gupta period. He was a famous court astrologer. When the king had a son, he called all famous astrologers in the court and asked them to cast the horoscope and give the necessary predictions. Everybody, to please the king, predicted that the prince would live for many years. But Mihira was the only person who openly told that the king has to protect his son from wild animals. After all the other astrologers had left, and the court was adjourned, the king called Mihira once again and asked, "Is anything wrong with my son's horoscope?" Mihira said, "I am extremely sorry, your son's life is in danger on his eighteenth year. You need to protect him." So the king took meticulous care right from the sixteenth year. He constructed a very special palace, in an upper floor with pillars. It was almost like a cage. The prince was not allowed to move out of that palace. On his eighteenth birthday, the complete palace was decorated. Early morning, the king and queen came to see their son. There they found that one of

the pillars of the palace had broken, fallen on their son, and he was dead. The pillar that fell down on the prince had the Varaha (wild pig) carving on it. From that day onwards, Mihira was named Varaha Mihira.

Do the predictions have a scientific base?

Without a scientific basis, I don't think the Potti Seeramulu Telugu University and the Annamalai University (in Tamil Nadu) would have started courses in astrology. They have regular as well as correspondence courses. They offer B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in astrology.

What is the care one needs to take while predicting?

We have to be very cautious while predicting and conveying the same to our clients. For example, by looking at the horoscope sometimes, if we get to know, the boy/girl is likely to get

married twice, we cannot immediately tell them, saying, "You are likely to get married twice, because your first husband will die and you will marry again, because you have *dwikalatra yoga*". Even when we read the horoscope with *dwikalatra yoga*, we need to deeply study and see. The person after sixty years of marriage may plan on celebrating *shastipurthy shanthi*, where they get married again for the second time. Or it could be another marriage also, because of divorce, separation or death. Sometimes, in the present day scenario, the couple's transferable jobs might compel them to stay separately. When we predict health issues (*aayurdhan*), we should be very careful. We have to just caution them. Though the negative things can reduce, they can never be erased. So, the astrologer should also be very wise and exercise discretion while communicating with the clients. ●

SWEET THOUGHT

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**Set thy heart upon thy work,
but never on its reward.**

- Srimad Bhagawad Gita

Gargi Vachaknavi

N. Sai Prashanthi

The Vedic period (c. 1500–500 BCE) is a foundational era in the history of Indian philosophy and spirituality, primarily dominated by male scholars and sages. However, amidst this male-centric intellectual tradition, there emerges a remarkable female philosopher—Gargi Vachaknavi. She is recognised as one of the leading sages and intellectual figures, particularly in the context of the Upanishadic tradition.

Her contributions to Vedic knowledge, particularly her role in philosophical debates regarding the nature of the self, Brahman (ultimate reality), and the universe,

have been immortalised in ancient texts. Gargi's inclusion in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad showcases her significant intellectual engagement and her



place in the wider dialogue about metaphysical and spiritual questions.

Historical Context & Life

Gargi Vachaknavi is considered a contemporary of Yajnavalkya, a renowned sage and philosopher. The primary texts that mention Gargi are the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and some of the later Upanishads, which are part of the larger corpus of the Vedic tradition. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is one of the principal Upanishads, and Gargi's dialogue with Yajnavalkya is recorded in its third book (or *kanda*).

The historical details of Gargi's life remain vague. She is believed to have been a descendant of the Vachakna

family, of Brahmin lineage. Gargi was known to possess extraordinary intellectual capabilities and was recognised for her vast knowledge of Vedic scriptures and philosophy. Unlike most women in ancient Indian society, who were primarily confined to domestic roles, Gargi was an esteemed intellectual figure who participated in significant philosophical debates.

Philosophical Debate with Yajnavalkya

One of the most famous episodes in the life of Gargi Vachaknavi is her philosophical debate with the sage Yajnavalkya. This debate, held during a Brahmodaya (debate on the nature of Brahman), is a cornerstone of



Vedic intellectual history. The debate is recorded in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (3.1-3.8).

In this debate, Gargi challenges Yajnavalkya's teachings on the nature of the ultimate reality (Brahman). Gargi asks him about the nature of the ultimate truth and questions the nature of the universe, asking, "What is the ultimate nature of Brahman, and how is it to be understood?"

Yajnavalkya responds by explaining that Brahman is the supreme consciousness, beyond all material limitations, and is the essence of all that exists. Gargi, displaying her deep philosophical understanding, presses him further with questions about the nature of the material world, consciousness, and the self. Despite her challenging questions, Yajnavalkya responds patiently, elucidating various metaphysical concepts that are central to the Upanishadic philosophy.

Gargi's involvement in such a profound philosophical dialogue not only illustrates her intellectual prowess but also highlights the significant role women could play in the Vedic intellectual tradition.

Role in Metaphysical Inquiry

Gargi is also noted for her pursuit of metaphysical and spiritual knowledge. In particular, she is credited with introducing key concepts of the Vedic tradition that would influence later philosophical schools such as Vedanta. Her questions, particularly those regarding the nature of Brahman and its relationship with the material world, are considered a precursor to later Vedantic thought, where the concept of an all-pervading, transcendent Brahman would become central.

In one famous passage, Gargi challenges Yajnavalkya by asking him to explain the nature of Brahman, even as it transcends the physical and metaphysical realms. Gargi's questions in the Upanishads underscore the Vedic tradition's emphasis on *jnana* (knowledge) and *tapas* (meditative discipline) as pathways to understanding ultimate reality.

Legacy in Vedic Philosophy

Gargi's contributions go beyond her debates and intellectual discourse. She represents the integration of feminine intellect into Vedic philosophical discussions. At a time when most scholarly and spiritual activities

were dominated by men, Gargi's inclusion in the Upanishads as a key participant in metaphysical discussions challenges conventional gender roles in ancient India.

Her philosophical inquiries reflect the primary focus of the Upanishadic tradition: the quest for self-realisation and understanding the ultimate reality (Brahman). Gargi's dialogues are some of the most detailed accounts of philosophical inquiry in Vedic literature, and they have been studied by scholars over centuries for their depth and clarity in discussing the nature of existence.

Contributions

Gargi's philosophical positions have been interpreted in different ways over the centuries. Traditional interpretations of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad focus on her as a figure representing intellectual curiosity and philosophical rigour. In modern interpretations, Gargi's presence in the Vedic texts is seen as a symbol of women's role in philosophical discourse, emphasising the importance of female voices in the development of spiritual thought.

Her dialogues with Yajnavalkya are often interpreted as a representation of the synthesis of

intellect and spirituality. While Yajnavalkya articulates an abstract, metaphysical understanding of Brahman, Gargi brings a more grounded, questioning approach to the conversation, pushing the limits of philosophical inquiry.

Feminism in Vedic Thought

Gargi's role in the Upanishads has also been interpreted through a feminist lens. She represents the possibility of women engaging deeply with philosophical and spiritual matters, breaking away from the conventional gender norms of ancient India. In a society where women were often relegated to domestic roles, Gargi's intellectual contributions suggest that women had a significant role in shaping Vedic thought and spiritual discourse.

Her inclusion in such important debates suggests that women, despite the patriarchal society of the time, could attain spiritual wisdom and participate in intellectual dialogues on an equal footing with men. Gargi's contributions can be seen as part of the broader tradition of female sages in ancient India, such as Maitreyee, who also engaged with profound philosophical questions in the Vedic texts.



Humare Ram: A Spectacular Extravaganza

A modern reimagining of the Ramayana delivers a visually stunning and thought-provoking theatrical experience, says Dr. Veena Adige who reviewed the show for Bhavan's Journal.

Humare Ram, this modern recreation of the Ramayana for the stage, begins where the traditional account ends—with Sita seeking refuge in Mother Earth. We Indians are so well-versed with this great epic and so eager to hear the tale again and again that it matters little where the story begins—from the very beginning, the end, or even the middle (the traditional *parayana* of the epic begins with the *Sundara Kanda*).

Surya, the sun, the eternal witness to what unfolds on earth down the ages is the *sutradhar*, the

narrator through whom the story of Ram and Sita is developed.

The play opens on a dramatic note—Luv and Kush, the twin brothers who travel reciting the story of Rama, confronting their father and the King, and demanding he justify his decision to banish Sita, their mother, to the forest while she was carrying his children.

Throughout history, numerous *upkathas* (subsidiary narratives) have emerged around the Ramayana, exploring possible explanations for the twists and turns of the main epic. The playwright makes intelligent

use of several such subsidiary streams to build complex characters of the main protagonists, Rama and Ravana, presenting them in a unique light.

In one compelling sequence, when Rama decides to worship Shiva before crossing the sea to Lanka, he seeks a righteous *brahmana* to perform the puja. Who could be more worthy than Ravana himself, known for his mastery of the Vedas and renowned for his devotion to Shiva—to whom he had once offered his own head? Thus, it is Shiva-*bhakta* Ravana who conducts the ceremony as Rama seeks Shiva's blessings. Since the worshipper must be accompanied by his wife, Ravana arranges for Sita to sit with Rama during this ritual before returning her to Lanka. This dramatic twist shows both

adversaries in a new light. It is interesting to note that though Rama and Sita meet, there is no dialogue between them. Nor is there any animosity between Rama and Ravana during the puja. Again, here it is Surya who is the narrator of the entire episode and it is through him that the decisions are conveyed.

Another innovative element is a dream sequence where Rama and Ravana meet and engage in serious dialogue. The conversations between the two on the penultimate day of the war stands as another highlight of the production. It is interesting to hear them speak frankly and clearly express their views.

The beautiful dialogues, especially the exchanges between Ravana and Lakshmana towards the end, make this a compelling





experience that is not to be missed. Ravana is in the last stages of his life, but Rama tells Lakshmana to talk to him, gain knowledge from him, and the long dialogues are about the philosophy of life. Rama shows respect for Ravana's knowledge and acknowledges his philosophical views.

Producer-director Gaurav Bhardwaj, known for his innovative storytelling style and compelling stage direction, created *Humare Ram* after two years of meticulous research and information gathering.

The play features a stellar cast with renowned actor Ashutosh Rana as Ravana, Rahul Bhuchar as Lord Rama, Danish Akhtar as Lord Hanuman, Harleen Kaur Rekhi as Sita, and Tarun Khanna

as Shiva, in pivotal roles. The musical score is provided by luminaries Sonu Nigam, Shankar Mahadevan and Kailash Kher.

Humare Ram delivers a grand theatrical experience packed with extraordinary performances, powerful dialogues, masterful lighting, evocative music, appropriate costumes, and special effects. The production features breathtaking visuals, excellent LED backdrops, superb aerial acts, and over 50 dancers, bringing new life to the epic story of Lord Rama.

The production enjoyed a sold-out run at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre in Mumbai and will return soon. This marked its 173rd performance within a year, testifying to its success. ●

Guillain-Barre Syndrome

K. R. K. Moorthy

Guillain Barre (pronounced *Ghee-Yan Buh-Ray*) syndrome is an acute self-limited polyneuropathy named after Guillain, Barre and Strohl, who first reported it in 1916.

GBS is a rare disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system (the network of nerves that carries signals to the spinal cord and other parts of the body), mistaking it for an enemy. The syndrome can affect the nerves that control muscle movements as well as those that transmit pain, temperature and touch sensations.

GBS is a complication of viral and other infections of the gut and respiratory tract.

GBS begins suddenly and can increase in intensity over a period of hours, days or weeks until certain muscles cannot be used at all. Weakness and tingling in the hands and feet are usually the first symptoms. In mild cases, it is marked only by a little weakness. In severe cases, it can cause devastating paralysis, leaving the person unable to breathe, interfering with heart rate and blood pressure, which could be life-threatening. At this stage, it

becomes a medical emergency and needs treatment in a hospital. GBS has a global mortality rate of 3 to 13 per cent depending on the severity of cases and access to medical care. Most deaths are due to respiratory failure or sepsis (body's extreme reaction to an infection).

GBS can affect all ages, but the risk increases with age and more for males. It usually affects adults above the age of 50. It should be treated and monitored as quickly as possible. Some patients may need intensive care. Treatment includes supportive care and immunological therapies. Most people recover fully from even severe cases of GBS, but in some rare cases it can result in

total paralysis and problems with breathing.

Symptoms

This may include: 1) Pins and needles feeling in the fingers, toes, ankles or wrists; 2) Weakness in the legs that spreads to the upper body; 3) unsteady walking or inability to walk or climb stairs; 3) Trouble with facial movements, including speaking, chewing and swallowing; 4) Double vision or inability to move the eyes; 5) Severe shooting or cramp-like pain which worsens during the night; 6) Trouble with bladder control and bowel function; 7) Rapid heart rate; 8) Low or high blood pressure; 8) Trouble in breathing; 9) Co-ordination problems and unsteadiness; 10) Paralysis of the muscles that



control breathing, blood infection, blood clots or cardiac arrest; 11) Weakness which may continue even after cure, and 12) Pressure sores.

Causes

The exact cause of GBS is not known. It usually appears days or weeks after a respiratory or digestive tract infection. GBS may be triggered by: a) Infection due to *campylobacter jejuni*, a type of bacteria often found in uncooked poultry and which causes gastroenteritis; b) Influenza virus; c) Epstein Barr virus; d) Zika virus; e) Hepatitis A, B, C and E; f) HIV virus that causes AIDS; g) Mycoplasma pneumonia; h) Surgery; i) Trauma; j) Hodgkin lymphoma; k) Covid-19 virus, and l) Cytomegalovirus.

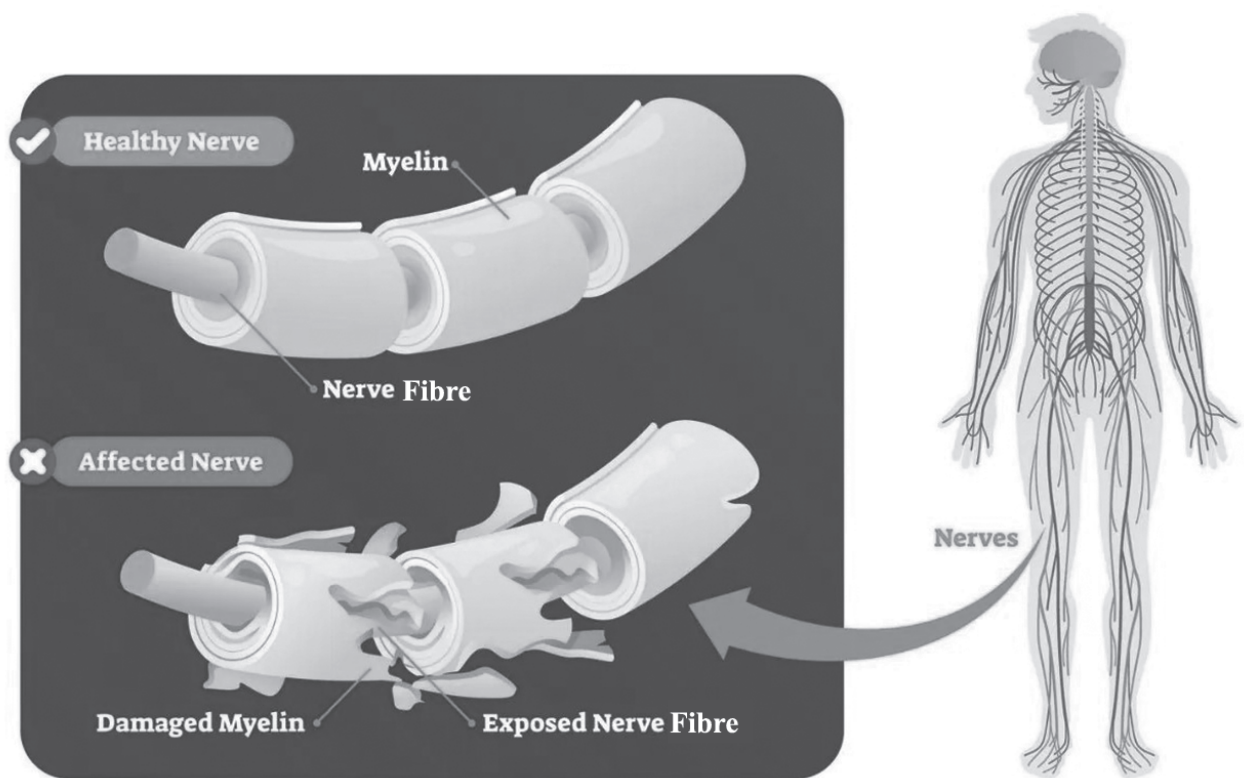
The body's nerves have a central conducting core called the axon that carries an electric signal. The axon is surrounded by an insulating layer called myelin. The myelin sheath speeds up the transmission of nerve signals over long distances. In the most common type of GBS, called Acute Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyradiculoneuropathy (AIDP), the immune system damages the myelin sheath. This is most prevalent in North America and

Europe. The most common sign of AIDP is muscle weakness, which starts in the lower part of the body and spreads upwards. In the other two types of GBS, known as Acute Motor Axonal Neuropathy (AMAN) and Acute Motor Sensory Axonal Neuropathy (AMSAN), the immune system may damage the axons themselves. As a result, the nerves cannot transmit signals efficiently and the muscles begin to lose their ability to respond to the brain's commands, which causes weakness and abnormal or no reflexes. These disorders are more prevalent in China, Japan and Mexico.

Miller Fisher Syndrome (MFS) is another type of GBS involving cranial nerves, which extend from the brain to the areas of head and neck. The symptoms are weakness and paralysis of the muscles that move the eyes, problems with balance and co-ordination, and abnormal or no reflexes.

Diagnosis of GBS

Cases of GBS begin differently for different people and there are several disorders with similar symptoms. Therefore, it is difficult to identify GBS in the early stages. Doctors usually perform the following:



Medical History and Physical Examination: The doctor will review the patient's medical history and perform a physical examination. These will let the doctor know how the person's muscles and nerves are working. The doctor will check whether the symptoms appear on both sides of the body and how fast the symptoms have progressed. He/she will also check to see whether any reflex has been lost.

Nerve Conduction Velocity (NCV) Test: This test measures the nerve's ability to send signals in the case of GBS. The signals travelling through the damaged nerves are slow because of the damage in the myelin sheath.

Cerebrospinal Fluid Analysis: The doctor may also conduct an

analysis of the cerebrospinal fluid that bathes the spinal cord. This fluid will contain more protein and fewer immune cells in people with GBS.

Electromyography: Very thin needle electrodes are inserted into the muscles to measure nerve activity.

Imaging: In some cases, an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) of the spinal cord and/or the brain is conducted to find any potential cause of muscle weakness.

Treatment

Currently, there is no cure for GBS. However, some therapies can reduce its severity and shorten recovery time. There are also other ways to treat GBS. People suffering from GBS are usually admitted in a hospital and treated in the ICU due to possible

complications arising out of muscle weakness, problems with breathing and heart rate. If an intervention is required it can be quickly provided by the hospital staff.

Two treatments are commonly used to stop immune-related nerve damage. Both are equally effective if started within two weeks of appearance of GBS symptoms. 1) **Plasma Exchange (PE)**, also known as **plasmapheresis**, involves removing some blood from the patient through a catheter. Plasma (the liquid part of the blood) is separated from the blood cells. These cells, along with the replacement fluid, are returned to the body. PE may work by removing the bad antibodies from the plasma that have been damaging the nerves. 2) **Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIG) therapy** involves injecting immunoglobulins—proteins that your immune system naturally makes to attack infecting organisms. The haemoglobins are

developed from a pool of thousands of healthy donors. This type of therapy can lessen the immune attack on the nervous system and quicken the recovery.

Supportive Care

This is important for dealing with the complications of paralysis as the body recovers and the damaged nerves begin to heal. Since respiratory failure can occur in GBS, a person's breathing should be monitored. The changes in heart rate, blood pressure (BP), digestion, and/or sweating should be monitored using equipment that measure these. If the person has problem with swallowing, special care should be taken to avoid choking.

Rehabilitation Care

Here, they can receive physical rehabilitation and physiotherapy, occupational and vocational therapy to regain strength and resume regular living activities using assistive devices and equipment. ●

SWEET THOUGHT

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**Hell has three gates -
Lust , Anger and greed**

- Srimad Bhagawad Gita

Sri Ramarajyam

Sanskrit Opera's Fresh Perspective

Mahatma Gandhi often invoked the ideal of Ramarajya—a utopian vision of India reflecting the glory of Sri Rama's kingdom where social justice, universal welfare, peace and prosperity prevailed. This ideal society, free from want and unburdened by greed or pettiness, remains a powerful aspiration in Indian consciousness.

Yet, even as Rama Rajya is held up as an ideal worth striving for, uncomfortable questions persist about Sri Rama's sense of fair play, particularly regarding the killing of Vali and the abandonment of his lawfully wedded wife Sita following town gossip. The play *Sri Rama-Rajyam* confronts these

controversies directly, offering a thoughtful examination of Rama's actions and motivations.

The medium chosen for this exploration is *Chitra-kavya* (poetic composition combining visual and literary elements), set to music and dance, with Sanskrit as its language. This dual approach serves two



compelling objectives: to present a counterview to Rama's critics by offering a deeper context for his decisions, and to challenge those who dismiss Sanskrit as a "dead" language by staging a vibrant Sanskrit production at the prestigious Shanmukhananda Hall in Mumbai.

Although this performance was originally staged in 2023, its themes and artistic achievement merit revisiting.

Textual Foundations & Narrative Structure

The composer has artfully integrated ideas from various texts, including the *Padma-Purana*, the *Garga-Samhita*, and the *Adhyatma-Ramayana*, in his attempt to clarify misconceptions about Sri Rama's impartial jurisprudence and impeccable character.

The narrative is structured as a trial, with Sri Rama being questioned by the presiding deity of Dharma disguised as a sage. Throughout the trial, the sage challenges the propriety of certain actions taken by Sri Rama. The remainder of the plot unfolds as Sri Rama offers a retrospective examination of these episodes, explaining how each of his actions aligned with established principles of dharma.

Performance & Production

Kalasadan, one of Mumbai's pioneering cultural organisations, presented the premiere of *Sri Rama-Rajyam*. Composed and choreographed by 'Marutisisya' Dr. Sriram Narainswamy Iyer, this operatic Sanskrit play was staged as part of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of Sri Shanmukhananda Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Auditorium, Mumbai.

As mentioned earlier, *Sri Rama-Rajyam* belongs to the *chitra-kavya* genre of Sanskrit poetry that was pioneered by Jayadeva through the *Gita-Govinda*, wherein the plot unfolds through songs and verses. The composition features eight songs and forty-four verses written in various classical Sanskrit metres such as *anushtubh*, *upajati*, *vasantatilaka* and *shardulavikridita*.

Thus, the ideals that Sri Rama embodied continue to inspire contemporary society. Even in this era of quantum computing and technological advancement, the timeless wisdom conveyed through Sanskrit remains profoundly relevant, bridging ancient philosophical insights with modern ethical challenges. ●

—(An appreciation by Essar)

Dialogue with Sri Rama: The Devotional Voice of Tyagaraja

Dr. Sriram Iyer

The musical landscape of South India was forever transformed by three legendary composers known as the ‘Trinity of Carnatic Music’: Sri Syama Sastri (1762-1827 CE), Sri Muttuswami Dikshitar (1775-1835 CE), and Sri Tyagaraja (1767-1847 CE). While each master cultivated a distinctive style—Sastri renowned for rhythmic complexity (*tala*), Dikshitar celebrated for scholarly depth and encyclopaedic scope—it was Tyagaraja whose compositions achieved unparalleled popularity through their profound emotional resonance (*bhava*).



What distinguishes Tyagaraja’s vast repertoire of over 700 compositions is their remarkable intimacy. Unlike many others who composed formal songs in praise of their favourite deities in

ornate language, Tyagaraja's compositions flow as spontaneous expressions reflecting his deeply personal relationship with his *ishta-devata*, Sri Rama. For Tyagaraja, devotion to Rama was not merely artistic inspiration—it constituted the very essence of his existence. His compositions reveal a spiritual dialogue spanning the complete emotional spectrum of *bhakti-rasa*, from tender longing and reverent adoration to bold reproach and humble self-examination.

Longing & Despair in Tyagaraja's Compositions

Longing for the vision of the Lord, Tyagaraja sings, "O scion of the solar dynasty! When will I be able to see you?" in the song '*Ennadu jutuno*'. In the popular song



'*Kanta judumi*', he pleads, "Please cast your side-glance upon me, your humble servant, at least once."

Eagerly yearning for Sri Rama's command to sing before him, in the song, '*Ramabhirama*', Tyagaraja asks Rama, "Will you not speak to me and delight my mind? Will you not ask this Tyagaraja to sing before you when well-adorned Sita worships you as you adorn the golden couch?"

In utter despair, he questions Sri Rama, "*O Rajivaksha* (the lotus-eyed one), Why this indifference towards me? Have I not surrendered myself to you, believing in the words of the pious that you protect those who seek refuge?"

He then implores, in '*Mapala velasi*', "O Ramachandra! Will you not protect me as my guardian? Does it require great effort to destroy my misery? O friend at times of distress! Protect me. Why this indifference?"

Tyagaraja's Expressions of Divine Love

In his longing for the Lord, Tyagaraja occasionally sings like a lovelorn *nayika* separated from her lover. In '*Palukavemi na daivama*', he implores: "O Lord! Will you not speak to me? What is the

reason for your anger? Have I not always danced to your tunes? Is it justified to let others laugh at me?"

In '*Ni daya rada*', he laments: "O Auspicious Rama! Will your mercy not descend upon me? Who can object to it? Is it fair to let my mind be in this state of disconcertment?"

Pleading before Sri Rama, like a *nayika* fearing separation from her lover, Tyagaraja, in his well-known composition '*Nannu vidaci*', beseeches: "O Rama! Do not go away, do not leave me. I cannot bear your separation even for half a minute. This body of mine is your belonging."

Tyagaraja's Humility & Self-Reflection

A devotee of the highest order, Tyagaraja is the epitome of modesty, which is clearly visible in compositions where he speaks to Sri Rama about his perceived ineligibility to secure divine grace. In '*Ninnana valasina*', Tyagaraja reflects: "O Rama! How can I blame you when I am myself blameworthy? Did I really meditate upon you in my mind without indulging in gossip? Did I truly render services unto the pious? Did I ardently worship your feet instead of being attached to wealth and women?" Tyagaraja's

self-deprecation is particularly evident in '*Duduku gala*', the second of the *Pancha-ratna kritis* in Gaula Raga, wherein he laments: "Can the progeny of any God protect someone like me whose mind is so wicked and is constantly drawn towards the sinful objects of senses? Despite attaining this rare human birth, I have deceived myself by becoming a slave to pride, jealousy, lust, greed and delusion. Despite a noble birth, I have committed lowly acts."

Tyagaraja's Divine Reproach & Clever Devotion

Reprimanding the Lord for his perceived indifference, in his '*Manamu leda*' in *Hamir-Kalyani*, Tyagaraja boldly questions: "Do you not have some shame? Do you not have any affection towards your own?" In his '*Mariyada gadayya*', he challenges: "O Lord! Will it not be unbecoming of yourself if you do not protect me?"

In '*Sita-nayaka*', Tyagaraja asks with subtle irony: "O Lord of Sita! Have you resorted to the mountain, unable to bear the worries caused by your devotees? Have you fled to Sri Rangam to recline there, only to prevent your devotees from approaching you? Have you stolen the robes of the *Gopis* upon seeing

Sudama who was approaching you in grief?” This exemplifies *narma-stuti*, whereby the composer implicitly eulogizes the manifestations of the Lord at Tirumala and Srirangam while also recounting the *lilas* of *Gopi- vastrapaharanam* and *Kuchelanugraha* and at the same time, ostensibly teasing Sri Rama.

A similar tone echoes in ‘*Evaramadugudura*’, where he laments: “O Rama! What boon may I seek from you? Anjaneya enjoys the exclusive privilege of carrying out your tasks and holding your lotus feet. The privilege of looking after the welfare of your devotees has been appropriated by Shatrughna; ecstatic loving devotion characterised by longing to hear your glories, desire to chant your names and behold your footprints has become the privilege of Bharata. The fortune

of serving you constantly, giving up hunger and sleep, is enjoyed by Lakshmana exclusively. The bliss of identity with you and beholding you as the indweller of the heart is reserved for Sita. What is the boon I can seek?”

Tyagaraja’s compositions, especially his intimate conversations with Sri Rama, stand as timeless expressions of devotion that continue to resonate with listeners across generations. Through these musical dialogues, he transforms the divine relationship into something deeply personal and accessible, inviting others to experience the same emotional connection with the divine. This unique approach to devotional music remains one of his most enduring legacies in Carnatic tradition. ●

SWEET THOUGHT

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**Man is made by his belief.
As he believes, so he is.**

- Srimad Bhagawad Gita

Percussion Maestro

Guru Vijay Shanker

New Jersey-based Guru T Shankaranarayanan Nandakumar is a veteran percussion maestro, a specialist mridangist. Nandakumar is the founder-director of TSN's Percussive Arts Centre (1998) in New Jersey (TSNPAC) that has trained several music aspirants, many of whom have become professionals. Over the past few decades, the Centre has become the premier institution to promote and propagate Indian classical music on the international scenario. His passion for perpetuating Indian arts extends globally, from India's festivals to international

workshops. He is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from Shanti Foundation, Chennai, besides several other honours and accolades, and has already been featured in prestigious publications like *San Francisco*



Post and *Chicago Journal* for his outstanding and invaluable contribution towards the promotion, propagation and enrichment of Indian classical music.

Born on March 17, 1958, in Ambalapuzha, Kerala, as the son of Saraswathi and Balakrishna Panicker, young Nandakumar developed a natural inclination towards music as he was inspired by his uncles, popularly known as the Ambalapuzha Brothers, and started learning Carnatic music and the mridangam from Guru Kaithavan Madhavadas. Being a child prodigy, he was given the title 'Laya Vidwan' and was privileged to be an accompanist for veterans in the field of Indian classical music like Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, MD Ramanathan, Bhimsen Joshi, TN Krishnan, M Balamurali Krishna, and several others. While in Mumbai, Nandakumar was closely associated with leading cultural organisations as a performer and mentor too, like the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha, Chembur Fine Arts Society, Gana Kala, Music Triangle, Nadalaya, etc.

A few decades earlier, Nandakumar drifted to the United States. He states, "Initially, it was

not easy to establish yourself in an alien land. I had to explain as to what a mridangam is and how it is used in Indian classical music and Indian classical dance in order to establish perfect rhythm, which is one of the key factors of classical music and how mridangam music is instrumental in maintaining a fine harmony between music and dance. My lecture demonstrations created a great impact and that helped me in re-establishing my centre for percussion music in New Jersey. In India, there are several musicians, and the opportunities are quite limited. Unless you are established, you are not invited. But in order to be established, you definitely require the right exposure, which was not easy. In the West, however, the scenario is completely different. If you are really talented and enterprising, a lot of platforms come your way and then it depends on you as to how devoted you are, and you should know how to market yourself which is very important. I felt I made the right decision of migrating to the US when I was younger. My lecture-demonstrations at the Lamar University of Houston, the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and my performances

at the Venkateswara Temple in Pittsburgh, the Academy of Indian Music in New Jersey and in Switzerland, and the Balaji Temple in Bridgewater opened new vistas and a lot of students came forward to learn to play the mridangam.”

Incidentally, Nandakumar is a versatile musician. He plays the *Konnakol* (vocal percussion), the *Thavil*, the *Ghatam* (earthen pot), the *Kanjira* and the *Morsing* with equal ease and dexterity. Besides Indians, there are several foreigners who have become his disciples.

Besides Mridangam *Arangetrams*, the centre organises the ‘Thyagaraja Aradhana’ as a tribute to the great Carnatic composer-saint Thyagaraja. The festival is one of the largest music festivals in Cleveland, and the decennial celebrations feature over 100 students. The Centre also conducted the 24-hour non-stop

Akhanda Seva Bhajan in aid of India’s tsunami victims.

Guru Nandakumar is the author of *Roots of Mridangam* and *Intricacies of Mridangam*. His discography is truly amazing—*Jewels of Rhythm* (Volumes 1, 2 and 3), *Vibrative Rhythms*, *Shruti Sandhya* (with T.N. Krishnan), *Vibrations* (with A Kanyakumari), *South Indian Percussion*, *Mridangam Solo*, *Demonstration on Talas and Rhythms*, *Classical Treat by Nedunuri Krishnamurthy*, *Jugalbandi Duet Series* (with Pt Bhimsen Joshi and Dr Balamurali Krishna), *A Duet on Strings* (with T N Krishnan and N Rajam), *Classical Instrumental Moods* (with Narayan Mani), etc.

As Guru Nandakumar says, “Music knows no boundaries; it flows like water, adapting, nourishing souls it touches along its path, while retaining its essence.” His musical journey has been sublime indeed! ●

SWEET THOUGHT

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PRODUCERS OF PURE GHEE SWEETS

**The ‘ Self ’ is one’s friend
as well as one’s enemy.**

- Srimad Bhagawad Gita

Greeting Cards with a Difference

J. V. Yakhmi

Christmas and New Year have brought greeting cards from near and dear ones, annually, for ages. The arrival of the Internet about three decades ago brought e-cards in addition, with options galore to make a greeting card exclusive and personalised. The academic world has gone a step further, using each such holiday season not only to update their friends about their achievements in research during the year passed, but also to share interesting happenings in their own personal lives, or to those of their family members. Some typical examples

drawn from e-cards received this year are as follows...

Dr. Katsuya Inoue, a renowned expert in the field of chirality in materials and a distinguished Professor in Chemistry at Hiroshima University in Japan, has shared a picture of his son, Sho Inoue, a student of Hiroshima University, riding a horse, while negotiating hurdles.

Prof. Yasuaki Einaga, a Chemistry Professor at Keio University at Yokohama (Japan), has, among other things, shared the picture of his daughter Karin, aged 16 years, blowing a

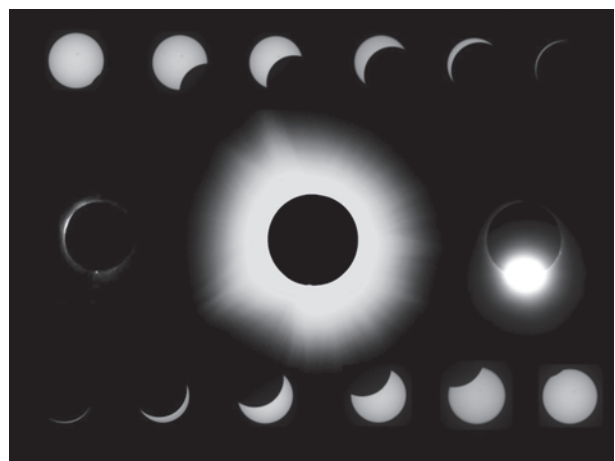


Picture courtesy: Prof. K. Inoue

trumpet in a music class at her high school.

Similarly, Dr. Ru-Shi Liu, a Distinguished Professor in Chemistry at National Taiwan University at Taipei, has proudly attached a picture of his granddaughter, Jing-Hui, aged two years, sitting in his lap.

Prof. Paul M. Lahti, a professor of Chemistry and a Co-Director of Energy Frontier Research Center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA, has



Picture of a total solar eclipse clicked on April 8, 2024, by Prof. Paul M. Lahti.

Picture courtesy: Prof. Paul Lahti



Picture courtesy: Prof. Y. Einaga

sent a card with very impressive pictures of the total solar eclipse that occurred on April 8, 2024, clicked by him as an amateur astronomy hobbyist. He also sent two photos clicked by him of the Comet 2023/A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS, which showed up in October 2024.

A research group belonging both to the Centro de Física, Universidade do Minho, Portugal, and the Basque Center for Materials, Applications and Nanostructures, Spain, has made it a practice every Christmas, over the past few years, to highlight the scientific progress made by them by designing a Christmas card that has a picture of all the group members standing with artefacts created from materials and devices made by them during the year passed.



Merry X-mas wishes on Dec 25, 2024.

Picture courtesy: Senentxu Lanceros-Méndez, Universidade do Minho, Portugal

For instance, on the occasion of Christmas in 2024, the group is shown to stand proudly with: Li-ion batteries of solid-state type, printable or micro-batteries; printed circuit boards for hybrid electronics for advanced digitisation; sensors and actuators for use in printers; cells made using

tissue engineering; metal-organic-framework materials; and materials used for removing heavy metals and contaminants from lakes and ponds for environmental remediation.

What an exciting way to present the progress made by a research group!

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Exploring the Genetic Story of South Asia

Gayatri Madan Dutt

In earlier decades, researchers working on the human genetic history of South Asia had made the female/maternal element in human genes (called mitochondrial DNA) the main focus of their studies. Since there had been relatively few female migrations into South Asia, the results which they obtained gave no definitive signal that there had been an 'Aryan' entry into the Indian subcontinent. This weakened the case of the 'Aryan invasion/migration' theorists.

However, in more recent decades, examination of the male/

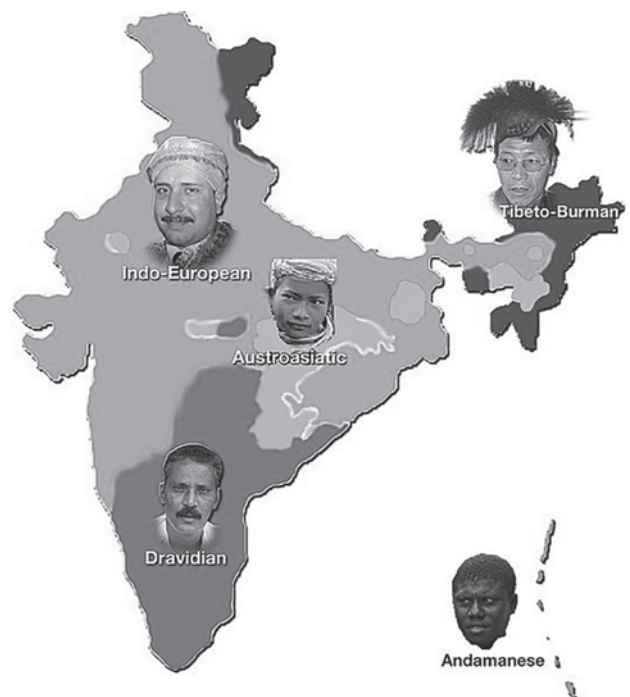
paternal component in human genes (called the Y-chromosome) was taken up on a large scale. The results of these studies, according to geneticists, have thrown up a quite different picture: an in-migration of mostly males who bore a so-called 'Aryan' R gene has been clearly identified, and in addition, three other ancient major waves of males bearing genes (abbreviated here as) J, O2 and O3 have been detected entering South Asia. Two came from the west, the researchers say, and two from the east. J arrived first from the Iranian Plateau in West Asia; thereafter came R from Central Asia;

O2 from around the Malaysian Peninsula; and O3 from the Yellow River Basin in China. Various scholars have assigned different dates for these entries, but generally agree that they arrived roughly after around 6,000 BCE.

Unexpectedly, early human fossils found some years ago outside the African continent have cast the current popular 'Out-of-Africa' theory of human origins into doubt. This could bring the Indian subcontinent, once upheld by early European scholars as the birthplace of humanity and language, back onto centre stage. This would mean that the very first human paternal (and maternal) migrations occurred, not 'Out-of-Africa', but 'Out-of-South Asia'. In which case, the four ancient J, R, O2 and O3 male ingresses would all represent, in essence, 'reverse' migrations 'back' into their Early Indian cradle. These four incoming male genetic groups would have been later descendants of basal ancestral J*, R* and O* which originated in, and then moved out of, the four ethno-linguistic 'niches' which had formed over thousands of years in South Asia.

As the 'Out-of-South Asia' theory proposes, the first human

migrations streamed west and east 'Out-of-South Asia'; any entries into South Asia, then, would be later 'back migrations' by descendant genes into the ancestral heartland. Humans are seen to have generally followed the same land and sea routes which their predecessors/ancestors took. Over the generations, there would have been repeated migrations out, and return migrations back in, largely between the same regions. It is suggested that in that early period, the out-spread world groups were in continuous communication with their original four South Asian homeland communities, linked as they were by genetic, linguistic, cultural and



Mainland India's four 'niches' of human varieties and language families

Source: Rakesh Tamang and Kumarasamy Thangaraj

emotional ties. Hostile intrusions would then appear to be a less likely explanation for these four ancient male-biased entries into South Asia.

Two events described in Puranic and Epic literature are so deeply embedded in the psyche of the Indian people that we cannot help but wonder whether they hold a seed of fact, despite their having been highly embellished and magnified over time.

The first event features the formidable personality, Parashurama or 'Rama of the Axe'.

Incensed at the murder of his father by *kshatriyas*, he vowed to exterminate all *kshatriyas*. He waged pan-India campaigns in

fulfillment of his vow. Memories of Parashurama occur densely across India. The state of Kerala is called 'Parashurama Kshetram' to this day, since the warrior-sage is believed to have 'reclaimed' or 'saved' it from the sea. In India's far northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh is the 'Parashurama Kund' with a temple beside it, said to mark the place that Parashurama visited during his wanderings. Pilgrims from the surrounding regions, including Nepal, visit this spot to perform a holy dip.

The second event is the Mahabharata War, the struggle for the throne of Hastinapur between two sets of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas, in which almost all the kingdoms of that time are described as having taken part.

Detailed recollections of the heroes who participated in this War, the battle tactics employed in it, the astronomical configurations witnessed at that time resonate throughout India even today. The Mahabharata War would have occurred sometime after the Parashurama event.



Parashurama: 'Rama of the Axe'

Source: sanatansoul.in



Parashurama Kund, Lohit River, Arunachal Pradesh

Source: esamskriti.com

Innumerable *kshatriya* kings, their heirs, generals and warriors are believed to have perished in both these events, leaving behind, on two separate occasions, leadership vacuums/succession crises and male-depleted regions across Ancient India. This article proceeds on the premise that these two memorially-imbedded events do harbour a core of historicity. We may note that they are estimated to have occurred roughly after around 6,000 BCE, the same time period during which paternal J, R, O2 and O3 are seen to have entered South Asia.

In West-Central India, Parashurama fought full-scale wars against his arch-enemies, the Haihayas (who killed his father), and their many allies. He also

waged campaigns in Northern India. In Southern India, stories are told to this day that Parashurama also came south on his vengeance-seeking mission, and that several *kshatriyas* there took off their sacred threads in order to disguise their true identity! But, unfortunately, not many appear to have escaped Parashurama's keen eye. Thus, several among the ruling class and their warriors in North as well as South India fell at the hands of Parashurama.

There is a story in the Mahabharata that after the heavy loss of *kshatriya* lives caused by Parashurama's offensives, the land fell into chaos from lack of experienced governance. In a bid to restore stability and revive the

kshatriya class, the kin of the deceased, many of whom would have also been settled abroad, were requested to take their places and continue their line, and these relatives did respond to the call. This inviting of warrior kin to replace deceased relatives appears to have been a practice long followed in South Asia. The *kshatriya* class was thus revived, and flourished till the Mahabharata War occurred, which decimated its numbers for a second time.

Of the four genetic ingresses, paternal J has been found to have entered South Asia first, roughly coinciding with the estimated time-period of Parashurama's northern and southern campaigns against the warrior communities. Strikingly, geneticists Lomous Kumar, Kumarasamy Thangaraj and their colleagues in their 2023 paper have found that paternal genes from Iranian West Asia (such as J) are present at high frequency today in both North and South India among warrior communities such as the Jats, Nairs and Thiyyas. Were these genes brought in by West Asia-settled relatives who migrated back to show loyalty towards, and take up the reins from, their South Asian

warrior kin who perished by Parashurama's hand?

Also striking is the 2016 study by geneticist Sakshi Singh and her colleagues, which attributes the migration of paternal J from Iranian West Asia to South Asia to a "unique and complex history of various known and unknown possible events" (Sakshi Singh and colleagues, 2016). Could Parashurama's India-wide militant operations have been one of these events?

The Mahabharata War took place sometime after the Parashurama event. This is roughly the time period during which paternal 'Aryan' R and also paternal Munda/Austro-Asiatic O2 and paternal Tibeto-Burman O3 are seen to have arrived in South Asia.

An eastern-Indian tribal people named Nishaada are described as having participated in the Mahabharata War. Historians Ramaprasad Chanda and N. K. Dutt have identified the Nishaadas of that time as the Munda/Austro-Asiatic-speaking tribes of India. A great many Nishaada kings and warriors too are said to have lost their lives in the War. As suggested above, there would have been close ties in this early period between

Eastern South Asia and Southeast Asia, a widespread region inhabited by communities who spoke related Munda/Austro-Asiatic languages.

Many scholars such as Sylvain Levi, Paul Mus and George Coedes have united South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia into a single macro-region which Paul Mus termed 'Monsoon Asia'. Their research found that, prior to the recent 'Indianisation/Sanskritisation' of Southeast and East Asia, this macro-region was already knit together by links that stretched deep into antiquity; that there existed "a base common to all of monsoon Asia" which "already shared common socio-cultural traits", which made the later "spread of Indian cultural elements throughout Southeast Asia so quick and productive."

A paper by geneticist Partha Majumder (2010) cites a 2009 genetic study by the prestigious HUGO Pan-Asian SNP Consortium which has found that South Asia has been "a major contributor to the gene pool of southeast Asia". Studies by researchers Vikrant Kumar and colleagues (2007), and by Zhongming Zhao and colleagues (2009) concluded that basal O*

(ancestor of Munda/Austro-Asiatic O2 and Tibeto-Burman O3), originated long ago in South Asia and then moved to Southeast Asia (and thereafter to East Asia). These results provide evidence that (Eastern) South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia, which together form 'Monsoon Asia', do indeed share close genetic ties.

So, just as kindred paternal 'Aryan' R-bearing groups reverse-migrated from Central Asia into the Northwestern and Northern parts of South Asia in an act of solidarity towards their relatives who were slain during the Mahabharata War, did a paternal O2-bearing Munda/Austro-Asiatic wave of males from around the Malaysian Peninsula 'return' to Eastern India at this time in an act of fidelity to fill the voids left behind by their deceased kin?

As stated in the Mahabharata, some Nishaada tribes allied with the Pandavas. But other Nishaada clans fought alongside the armies of King Srutayudha of Kalinga (roughly today's Odisha), who had chosen to side with the Kauravas. King Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha (roughly today's Assam), too fought on the Kaurava's side. The Kauravas and

their allies were dealt a crushing, humiliating defeat by the Pandava's side. Tribes named in the Mahabharata as Kiraata and Cheena were part of Bhagadatta's ill-fated armies. The Kiraatas and Cheenas, who also fell in large numbers on the battlefield, have been identified as the Tibeto-Burman-speaking peoples living in the northeast at that time. Did a Tibeto-Burman paternal O3-bearing migration from China, to show unity and support towards their slain kin, too journey back into Northeastern South Asia during this dire time?

Interestingly, it was earlier thought that this detected westward movement of Tibeto-Burmans from China into South Asia was caused by population increase following the introduction of barley cultivation in China. However, a 2022 genetic study by Chi-Chun Liu and colleagues has pointed out that barley-cultivation-driven expansion may not be the "sole explanation" for such a "massive demic diffusion" (Chi-Chun Liu and colleagues, 2022) of Chinese Tibeto-Burmans into South Asia. Could the explanation instead be that O3 male waves returned in an act of allegiance to their original South Asian Himalayan homeland to replace the loss of Kiraata and

Cheena rulers and warriors who were related to them, subsequent to the Mahabharata War?

This, then, is the proposal offered here to elucidate why the four ancient genetically-detected majority-male migrations arrived in South Asia; these entries were neither violent invasions nor 'foreign' immigrations, but only the 'peaceful loyal return home' of South Asian-origin groups who had spread abroad.

The Indian subcontinent has been given special status in this article as the cradle of humanity and language. As suggested, early world groups were aware that South Asia was their area of origin, so they bore special sentiments towards it. Their return migrations, hence, were spurred by special motivations too. The more recent incomers, however, entered as conquerors. They may have forgotten, with the passage of time, that South Asia was their ancestral home. Yet, we learn that most of them assimilated seamlessly into the South Asian fabric, rather than choosing to totally disrupt it. Did they instinctively sense their special bond with it? This has probably enabled India to keep her long unbroken civilisational continuity. ●

Turmeric in the Scientific Spotlight Again

Dr. A. P. Jayaraman

Turmeric has been a cornerstone of Indian culture, cuisine and medicine for millennia. In Ayurveda, turmeric is known as *haridra* and is prescribed for its anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and digestive properties. It plays a crucial role in religious and cultural ceremonies such as weddings, where it is used in rituals symbolising purity and prosperity. In Indian cooking, turmeric is a staple ingredient, adding colour and flavour to dishes like curries, dals and pickles. Additionally, traditional remedies involve consuming turmeric with milk (*haldi doodh*), which is now

gaining popularity in the West as ‘golden milk’ for its purported health benefits.

Curcumin: Science vs. Pseudoscience

The active chemicals in turmeric are polyphenols which belong to a group of compounds known as curcuminoids with the molecular formula $C_{21}H_{20}O_6$. They possess unique chemical properties



that allow them to interact with a variety of biological pathways. However, one major drawback of curcumin is its poor bioavailability, meaning the body has difficulty absorbing and utilising it efficiently. Scientists have developed various formulations such as combining it with piperine (black pepper extract), liposomal curcumin and nano-curcumin, to enhance its absorption.

While numerous studies highlight curcumin's potential health benefits, the compound has also been at the centre of exaggerated and dubious claims. Some alternative medicine advocates claim that curcumin can cure cancer, reverse Alzheimer's disease, and treat nearly every chronic illness. However, many of these claims lack evidence-based reasoning and robust scientific backing.

A major issue with curcumin research is the inconsistency in study results. Factors such as low bioavailability, differences in experimental conditions, and variations in turmeric formulations contribute to conflicting findings. This has led to scepticism in the scientific

community regarding curcumin's purported efficacy beyond its well-established antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

Curcumin under Radar

In recent years, the scientific journal *Nature* has taken a stance against publishing curcumin research papers due to widespread methodological flaws and irreproducible results in many studies. Some researchers have reported difficulties in replicating experiments due to issues such as poor solubility, unreliable controls, and exaggerated conclusions drawn from weak data. The controversy surrounding curcumin research reflects the broader problem of scientific reproducibility in natural compound studies. While curcumin undoubtedly has some health benefits, more rigorous clinical trials with standardised methodologies are needed to clarify its true potential.

Curcumin for Muscles

Intense exercise can cause micro-tears in muscle fibres, leading to inflammation and soreness. Curcumin helps by lowering inflammatory markers and reducing oxidative stress caused by free radicals. This, in



turn, improves pain perception and enhances the muscle's range of movement, making recovery faster and more efficient. The study suggests that a daily intake of 1-4 grams of curcumin is effective for muscle recovery, particularly after eccentric exercises, which place higher strain on muscles. However, experts caution that bioavailability—the body's ability to absorb curcumin—plays a crucial role in its effectiveness. While the study highlights promising results, researchers emphasise the need for further studies, particularly in diverse populations, including female athletes and individuals undergoing hormonal changes such as menopause. Individual responses to curcumin can vary

based on genetic, hormonal and metabolic factors.

Turmeric Thoughts

Turmeric's potential as a natural supplement for muscle recovery is compelling. Whether you are a seasoned athlete or a fitness enthusiast, incorporating curcumin into your diet could prove to be a natural way to support your body's recovery process. However, consulting a healthcare professional for personalised advice on dosage and timing remains crucial. As research continues, turmeric may soon become a staple in sports nutrition.

1. Natural Dye: Turmeric has been used for centuries as a natural dye for fabrics, giving them a vibrant yellow hue. In India, it is still used to colour clothing and even wedding garments.

2. Glow in the Dark: When mixed with boric acid, turmeric glows bright red under UV light, making it a fun experiment for science enthusiasts.

3. Ancient Cosmetic: In ancient India, turmeric was applied to the skin as a beauty treatment, believed to impart a natural glow and prevent acne.

4. Holy Spice: Turmeric is considered sacred in Hindu rituals

and is used in religious ceremonies, often applied to idols and as a symbolic offering.

5. Turmeric Latte: Also known as ‘golden milk’, turmeric-infused milk has gained global popularity as a health drink, particularly in Western wellness circles.

6. Anti-Ant Venom: Some cultures believe that turmeric powder deters ants and other insects, using it as a natural repellent.

7. Historical Medicine: Marco Polo mentioned turmeric in his travel records in 1280, marvelling at its similarities to saffron in colour and properties.

8. NASA’s Space Connection: Researchers have explored curcumin’s potential in space medicine, as it could help counteract muscle and bone loss in astronauts.

9. Turmeric Teeth Whitening: Some people use turmeric as a natural teeth whitener despite its strong yellow colour!

10. Unusual Ice Cream Flavour: Turmeric has found its way into the world of desserts, with some chefs creating turmeric-flavoured ice creams that combine sweetness with spice.

Turmeric Milk Again

You might have noticed ‘golden’ turmeric milk on the menus of

several eateries and cafes. Though recently advertised as a caffeine-free, healthy coffee alternative, the drink is a fancified version of *haldi doodh*—a traditional Indian beverage often used as an at-home cold remedy. Researchers have developed an efficient method to make a plant-based, instant version of the drink that maintains the beneficial properties of the ingredients while also extending their shelf life. Curcumin is difficult to separate from turmeric, requiring complicated extraction techniques that involve organic solvents, multiple days and lots of energy. The compound tends to break down over time, shortening its shelf life. So, inspired by golden milk, scientists investigated whether there was a way to extract and store curcumin within plant-based milk.

They first added turmeric powder to an alkaline solution, where the high pH made the curcumin more soluble and easier to extract than in plain water. This deep red solution was then added to a sample of soy milk, turning it a dark yellow colour. They brought it down to a neutral pH of around 7. Just like low-pH acids, high-pH

bases are not the most pleasant things to consume. The neutralised pseudo-golden milk could be enjoyed as is, but to further preserve it, the team removed the water from the solution through freeze-drying, producing an instant golden milk powder.

Turmeric Eye Drops

A derivative of turmeric could be used in eye drops to treat the early stages of glaucoma. The researchers report a new method to deliver curcumin, extracted from turmeric, directly to the back of the eye using eye drops, overcoming the challenge of curcumin's poor solubility. The research team found that the eye drops can reduce the loss of retinal cells in rats, which is known to be an early sign of glaucoma. They are also investigating how the eye drops could be used as a diagnostic tool for a range of conditions.

Turmeric gives Lung Support

Now, new research finds that curcumin may provide lasting protection against potentially deadly lung damage in premature infants. Premature infants often need the assistance of ventilators and forced oxygen therapy because they are frequently born with inadequate lung function. These therapies can cause the infants to

suffer lasting lung damage and even death. Researchers at the Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute discovered that curcumin provided protection against bronchopulmonary dysplasia, a condition characterised by scarring and inflammation, and against hyperoxia, in which too much oxygen enters the body through the lungs, for up to 21 days after birth.

The Future of Turmeric Research

While turmeric's benefits are well-documented in traditional knowledge systems, scientific validation is crucial for its acceptance in modern medicine. Researchers are working to understand its mechanisms of action at the molecular level, aiming to develop more effective formulations. As the demand for natural and plant-based remedies rises worldwide, turmeric stands out as a promising candidate for integrative healthcare. Turmeric's journey from ancient kitchens to high-tech laboratories is a testament to the enduring wisdom of traditional medicine and the power of scientific inquiry. As research continues to unfold, this golden spice may yet hold the key to many health breakthroughs in the years to come.



वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम् । वेदो नित्यमधीयताम् । वेदाः वयं वः शरणं प्रपन्नाः । वेदा ये नः परं धनम् ।



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Bhakti Margam

C. K. Subramaniam

The Bhagavati Seva Puja is an ancient and powerful ceremony in honour of the goddess Raja Rajeswari, who is revered for her prosperity, fertility, purity and abundance. The ritual is performed to purify the aura of negativity that surrounds us and to correct the destabilising influences of the planets, thus restoring peace and harmony in our lives. The practice, prevailing mainly in the state of Kerala in Southern India, aims to satisfy desires, relieve misery and restore balance in the world. This ritual is performed primarily at night, with worship offered to the goddesses Parvati, Durga or Kali. Performing

this puja allows us to receive the benign grace of the Goddess and to bless us with longevity, health, wealth and happiness.

The Bhagavathi Seva is an ancient Vedic puja ceremony that balances the malefic effects of planets. It is a very beneficial puja performed to keep us in harmony with cosmic forces, thereby removing and overcoming the sorrows of life and bringing spiritual uplifting.

Bhagavathi Seva actually means worship or service to the Goddess. It is both auspicious and a common practice to perform this puja in the month of *Karthikai* or *Adi* (the period from July 15 to August 15)



every year. It is common to conduct this for getting married, removing fear perceived or otherwise, removal of evil spirits, and the successful completion of projects of any kind. This puja consists of invoking the presence of the Goddess and offering services to her. Once the services are offered, the *Ritvik* (priest) sends the Goddess back to her abode.

Preparation for the Puja

This puja can be performed either in a temple or at home. Performing this puja at home introduces good vibes in a home and removes any undesirable ones. When this puja is performed in the temple, the power of the deity is increased considerably. A priest can perform Bhagavathi Seva with minimal supplies or by elaborately bringing *bhakti* and joy in the minds of devotees.

Before starting the Bhagavathi Seva, the priest creates a mosaic called *Padmam* (lotus). This is normally done using rice powder,

turmeric powder, mango leaf powder and black powder. The design of the *padmam* may be simple like a swastika or complex, e.g. *ashtadala padmam*. During the puja, the Goddess is invoked and seated on this *Padmam*. Four lamps are placed at the four corners and one, at the centre. The puja commences with the priest cleaning himself by performing ablutions. The priest wears clean new clothes since he is undertaking a great religious rite. As this is done in the evening, the priest is seated facing west. He protects himself by chanting mantras so that he can perform the puja without any disturbance. The presence of the Goddess is invoked with the power of an appropriate *mantram*, which varies depending on which Goddess is being invoked. After invoking her presence, she is also protected by the *mantrams*. It is important to chant them with the correct pronunciation and intonation, and the person



chanting should have the concentration and devotion to do so. The eleventh chapter of the *Devi Mahatmyam* is recited at the end of the Bhagavathi Seva. While reciting, the priest and all those present do *Namaskaram* at the end of each verse, ending with *Narayani Namostute*. Thus, it is also called *Namaskara Japam*. Doing so many *Sashtanga* (complete) *Namaskarams* one after the other is a back-bending exercise.

The Goddess is offered water for cleansing herself and *naivedyam*, which is converted into *amritam* with the chanting of the appropriate *mantram*. A *manasa* puja is offered to the Devi. When the Devi is pleased with such services, a *Prasanna* puja followed by *Pushpanjali* is performed using a *mantram*

appropriate for the result desired. While the priest is performing *pushpanjali*, it is customary for devotees to recite various *stotrams*. It is auspicious to recite the *Devi Mahatmyam*, *Lalitha Sahasranamam* and *Soundarya Lahari*. When the *pushpanjali* is complete, the Goddess is sent back to her abode. The wicks of the centre lamp are grouped together and put out to signify that the holy flame associated with the Goddess has been put out. The wick is again lit in an ordinary lamp to be used for ordinary purposes.

Since we mortals are always after material benefits, we pray to Gods and Goddesses to give us what we desire. The concept of Bhagavathi Seva is very beautiful. It makes sense even in the present-day scientifically-inclined society. ●

Recent Happening

Unique Arms and Weapons Exhibition

A unique five-day exhibition of medieval arms and weapons was organised by the Navi Mumbai Kendra from December 26 to December 30, 2025. There were demos on the use of arms on three of the days by children as young as four years old to adults.

The reviews had visitors hailing it as 'awesome', 'unique' and 'mind-blowing'. The demos showcased were undoubtedly highlights that stole the show, cementing a lasting impression on all who attended. The events' uniqueness earned widespread acclaim. They were awe-inspiring with their movements, flexibility

and agility. The discipline of the performers was inspiring. Each participant was perfection personified.

Shri Jaspal Singh Sidhu, Head of Sikh Coordination Committee, Government of Maharashtra and President, Supreme Council of Navi Mumbai Gurudwaras; Shri Bal Malkit Singh, Executive Chairman, Maharashtra State Punjabi Sahitya Academy; Swami Yoga Pratapji; Dr Shri Amarpreet Singh Ghura of Maharashtra State Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Bhavan's executives Dr Sen Gupta, Shri Harish Aiyer, and others lit the lamp and inaugurated the exhibition.





Renowned arms expert Girija Dudhat delivered an informative presentation, providing a detailed description of the medieval arms on display. The audience gained valuable insights into the history, significance and craftsmanship of these ancient weapons. Girija Dudhat, is the arms and armour expert consultant for Shiv Shastra Shaurya Gatha exhibition, and an author of books on Indian arms.

The Shastra Puja was performed with reverence and devotion, adding a profound spiritual dimension to the medieval arms exhibition by the guests, Swami Yoga Pratap and others. This sacred ritual, an integral part of our cultural heritage, served as a poignant reminder of the historical and spiritual context of the exhibited artefacts.

After the inauguration and Gatka demo by Sikh students on

December 26, the event was followed by an energetic performance by Shri Omkar's Warrior group on December 28, demonstrating *lathi kathi*, *talwar baazi* and *dhand patta*. Youngsters were deft with the lathis and twirled them effortlessly. They were obviously well-trained and well practised.

On December 29, there was a special slot for children to see and handle the weapons under strict supervision as the weapons were heavy and sharp. Shri Pankaj Bhonsle's group Jai Bhavani Mardani demonstrated *padak*, *ladhat patta*, *talwar baazi bhaala*, and others. A young lady resplendent in traditional Maharashtrian finery, dazzled the audience with her incredible energetic performance which earned her a thunderous applause. ●

Indian Food in New York

When Oscar winner Jennifer Lawrence entered the South Indian restaurant *Semma* (meaning 'awesome' in Tamil) in New York, Chef Vijaya Kumar's eyes widened. This was the second time she was coming for a meal. Her husband, Cooke Maroney, an art gallery director, accompanied her. They ordered a wide variety of dishes. At the end of the dinner, Jennifer told Vijaya that it was her best meal.

On another night, he saw a woman in her late thirties shedding tears. Vijaya thought the food was too hot for her. So, he offered her sweet yoghurt. She said, "These are happy tears. I have not had my mother's food for a long time. It seemed to me she made this food. I miss home." She had grown up in Tamil Nadu.

Vijaya won a Michelin Star for the third year. The Michelin website states that the criteria for the awards are five: 'The quality of the ingredients, the



harmony of flavours, the techniques, the personality of the chef as expressed through their cuisine and, just as importantly, consistency both across the entire menu and over time'.

Throughout the year, Michelin inspectors have a meal at a restaurant many times, but they are anonymous.

Semma started in October 2021. At the entrance, there is an upside-down *kettuvallam*, a traditional boat, inspired by the houseboats in Alleppey. There are coir mats on the ceilings and hanging bamboo lamps and chairs. *Semma* imports all the spices,

including black pepper, cardamom and cinnamon, from India.

Asked whether he tempers the masala if the patron is non-Asian, Vijaya smiles and says that his company motto is 'Unapologetically Indian'. So, they don't turn down the spices!

The most popular food item is the 'Gunpowder Dosa'. The menu lists it as a rice and lentil crepe served with potato masala and sambar. It costs \$21. *Semma* sells about 150 dosas a day. Vijaya

joined the State Institute of Hotel Management and Culinary Technology in Trichy. A friend invited him to join 'Dosa', a restaurant in San Francisco. He worked there for six years. 'Dosa' closed after a run of 15 years, in September 2019, during the Covid pandemic.

In 2014, Vijay opened 'Rasa' in Burlingame in San Mateo, California. For five years in a row, he won a Michelin Star for contemporary South Indian food.

The Most Famous Stone

One of the largest cut diamonds in the world, is part of the British Crown Jewels. The interesting winds of history that have carried the mysterious Kohinoor, through multiple historical hands, across three continents, have made it an object of limitless fascination and controversy. The thing about the Kohinoor, which was why it was so magnificent, was that it was a whopping great diamond of its



day—the biggest. It is now only 105 carats. Today, the diamond is on public display in the Jewel House at the Tower of London.

Control Your Bio-Clock

When we have to get up early in the morning, we set an alarm and go to sleep. However, sometimes, even without an alarm, we wake up

at the exact time we planned. This is called the biological clock, or bio-clock. Many people generally believe that humans live up to

Benefits of Listening to Your Biological Clock



- ✓ Excellent metabolism.
- ✓ Better appetite regulation.
- ✓ Improved sleep quality.
- ✓ More effective exercising.
- ✓ Sharper thinking.

80-90 years and feel that all diseases start developing between the ages of 50 to 60 years. With this deep-rooted belief, they unknowingly set their own bio-clock accordingly.

If we mentally adjust our bio-clock with positive thoughts and practise meditation regularly, we can live healthily for 100 years. We must believe that there is no chance of diseases affecting us between the ages of 40 and 90.

We should strongly believe that old age begins only at 120 years.

Try to look youthful. Try to wear 'young-looking' clothes which will boost your confidence levels.

Do not allow your mind to perceive yourself as old. Do not

eat food with negative thoughts, thinking it is adulterated or unhealthy. Instead, firmly say to yourself, "With the power of meditation, the food I consume is purified and transformed into a source of eternal youth, complete health, and a long life of 120 years."

Otherwise, negative thoughts will trigger the release of harmful enzymes in our bodies, damaging our digestive system and overall health. Always stay active. Believe that as you age, your health improves. (This is actually true.) Happiness and illness cannot coexist. Where there is one, the other cannot exist. So, stay happy to stay healthy. Watch comedy movies daily, and laugh out loud.

Every problem originates from our mind—our thought process and especially our words.

Even as a joke, never say, “I am getting old.” So, reset your mental

‘bio-clock’ for a longer lifespan. Change your perspective, change your life! As they say, it is all in the mind.

Cherish life to the fullest!

Happy Birthday

A sweet, plump and fair-looking ‘young’ lady, cheerful and smiling, obliged her dear guests with a keyboard presentation and a lovely classical *bhajan*. She is Indu Shedde, mother of Meenakshi Shedde, who is India and South Asia delegate to the Berlin Film Festival, a National Award-winning critic and a columnist of *Sunday Mid-Day*.

Indu Amma is active, with all her faculties intact. And she is 98 years young, two years short of a century. While people half her age are grumbling about health issues, pains and gains, ‘young’ Indu is ramrod straight, talks to all, even nature, and is a role model to be followed.



She relishes her normal food, has no complaints, and mixes happily with the other residents of Shanti Kunj, an abode of senior citizens. In her youth, she had created many beautiful showpieces using vegetables and fruits and had walked up to the then *Femina* editor, Vimla Patil, and presented her with them. This earned her a job and appreciation.

May the 98 turn to a century and more!

(Compiled by Dr. Veena Adige)

SWEET THOUGHT

Sri Krishna Sweets
PRODUCERS OF PURE GHEE SWEETS

Pleasure from the senses
seems like nectar at first.
But it is bitter as poison
in the end.

- Srimad Bhagawad Gita

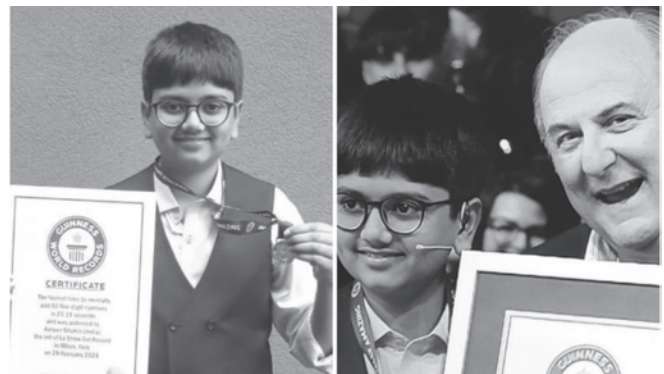


Guinness Record Holder Aaryan Shukla

Fourteen-year old Aaryan Shukla lives in Nashik, Maharashtra. He created several records this year with his Maths calculations. His parents knew he was good with numbers as a child. But around the age of six, he began doing maths problems in his head. His parents found that interesting. After all, neither of them had any special math talents.

Many people in the world enjoy doing difficult maths problems in their heads. There are contests focused on these mental calculations. At these contests, people might add lots of four-digit or five-digit numbers in their heads, or they might multiply or divide large numbers.

Aaryan Shukla recently set six new Guinness World Records in a single day in Dubai—all for math problems that most people would need a calculator to solve.



When Aaryan was eight, his parents entered him in some international mental calculation contests, and he began winning them. He enjoyed travelling and representing his country. People began calling him a 'Human Calculator'.

In 2022, Aaryan went to the Mental Calculation World Cup in Germany. He was the overall winner, and set three new contest records. At the next Mental Calculation World Cup in September of 2024, he won all five main contests and was the overall winner again.

A year ago, Aaryan set a Guinness World Record by

correctly adding up 50 five-digit numbers in just 25.19 seconds. Each number flashed on a screen for a half a second, and Aryan

added them all up. “It’s so fast that you can’t think,” he says. “You just need to do the calculations.”

Whale sets World Record!

A male humpback whale travelled over 13,000 kilometres across three oceans, making it the longest known trip. Humpback whales are known for covering long distances. They swim from warmer waters where they mate and have children in colder areas, where they feed. This can mean journeys of over 8,000 kilometres, although normally, these trips are made travelling north and south.

But one whale made a very different kind of trip. In July 2013,

a male humpback whale was spotted in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of Colombia. In 2017, the whale was again seen near Colombia. But in 2022, scientists spotted the same whale on the other side of the world, near Zanzibar in the Indian Ocean.

The scientists made the discovery using information from a website called HappyWhale.com. HappyWhale collects photos of whale tails, which are called ‘flukes’. Every



whale's fluke has its own special pattern of marks that can be used to identify it, similar to the way fingerprints can be used to identify humans. In 2013 and 2022, the

whale was spotted among a group of males competing for a female. The whale may have made its trip to have a better chance of finding a female mate.

Earth-Shaking Mystery Solved

Last September, scientists around the world were puzzled by an unusual rumbling travelling through the Earth. It was a strong signal, but it was not an earthquake. No one knew what it was. A year later, scientists have solved the mystery. A landslide triggered a massive tsunami, which became a powerful bouncing wave.

Geologists around the world had noticed something strange on their seismographs. Seismographs measure vibrations coming through the Earth's crust. When an earthquake happens, seismographs show a busy pattern of lines.

But this signal was different from that of an earthquake. It was a slow vibration, similar to a hum. It reached a high point every 92 seconds—much slower than an earthquake. The strange signal lasted

for nine days, then slowly went away.

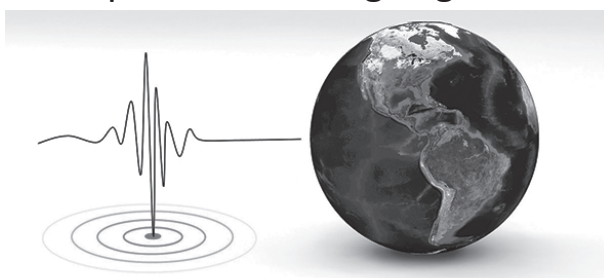
As many as 70 scientists from 15 countries began to exchange ideas and information with regard to this mystery.

One strong clue was that seismographs showed a landslide crashing into Dickson Fjord on the east side of Greenland. A fjord is a long, thin channel of deep water surrounded by tall cliffs.

A massive piece of rock—about five football fields long, and just as wide—fell off a mountain in eastern Greenland. The glacier that had been supporting the rock was melting because of climate change.

When the glacier gave way, all the rock and ice went smashing down into Dickson Fjord. The result was a gigantic tsunami, 200 metres high. The tsunami also showed up on seismographs, but it did not explain the unusual signal, which had continued.

The scientists knew they were on to something. They began to wonder about a special kind of bouncing



wave, called a seiche. A seiche is a special wave that bounces back and forth across an enclosed area, like a bathtub or a swimming pool.

Once the scientists got more detailed information about the shape of the sea floor in the fjord, they discovered that the landslide and the resulting tsunami would create a massive seiche.

A huge wave could be seen slapping back and forth in the fjord

for nine days. The wave had enough force for the vibrations to reach seismographs around the world until they slowly died out.

As unusual as this event was, scientists say we may see more like it in the future. The landslide that started it all was triggered by climate change. As temperatures rise and glaciers melt, some mountains will become less stable, making such landslides more likely.

What's Behind the Scenes?

When you watch a film or TV, what you see is not what really happens behind the scenes. It is fantasy or make-believe. The characters are designed, literally! A short person can look tall by using raised platforms. Or someone can look handsome or

beautiful with the right make-up, correct black and white screens, and there are also background sounds created such as that of trains, horse hoofs, rains, etc.

Reality is different. Anything is possible on the small or big screen. There are background noises when



recordings are made. So dubbing is done inside the studio. The voice of an actor can be changed to make it sound gruff or sweet; the complexion of the voice can be changed. They can impose a running train behind the shot of a hero running or jumping off the track at the nick of time. Anything can happen.

A visit to Film City in Goregaon, Ramoji in Hyderabad, or Universal Studios in Los Angeles in USA will

take you behind the scenes and give you a dose of reality. People working there actually remake the scenes to show how the final product is reached. They can make gunshots sounds and show the victim getting hurt, when in reality nothing of the sort happens.

The scenes are ready-made by the writers and editors. The director puts it into action and we see imagination turning into reality. That is the magic of the present times.

(Compiled by Dr. Veena Adige)

Bhavan's Journal

To All Subscribers,

We are happy to inform you that after updating the mailing list, the Bhavan's Chennai Kendra has already posted hard copy of this issue to all the Life Subscribers/Members and Annual Subscribers. Hereafter, the *Bhavan's Journal* hard copies will be posted to you on regular basis from Chennai itself.

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— Editor

The Realisation

I have done lots of favours
For my loved ones and for my haters,
But surprisingly, got the same
flavours
Of their return action from both
states.

My life is like a movie.
All hurt me, and in return,
I make their lives groovy
Whenever it comes to my turn.

I have put in much effort
For those dearest and closest,
Although I get hurt as they
Lock me in a pain-filled closet.

I am damn alone,
Sitting in a chair,
Writing in my tone,
Without any care.



Nobody is understanding
How hard I am suffering.
I look like I am happily standing,
But that is my outer covering.

Not writing for the fame,
Nor doing it for the limelight,
I feel like I am in a game,
But realise that it is my own life.

—**Pranav Tiwari** (Baawe),
*Sant Atulanand Residential
Academy, Varanasi,
Uttar Pradesh.*

Would you like to write too? If you are a school student and wish to share your creative skills, *Bhavan's Journal* would love to provide the platform. Send your entries with Name, Age and School's Name to bhavansjournalho@gmail.com and the best ones will get published.

SWADHYAYA

Valmiki Ramayana

(Uttarakanda, Canto 98)



कृत्वाभिषेकं सुतयोर्युक्तं राघवनन्दन ।
तवानुगमने राजन्विद्धि मां कृतनिश्चयम् ॥१४॥

*kritvaabhishekam sutayoryuktam raaghavanandana
tavaanugamane raajanviddhi maam kritanishchayam.*

(Shatrughna told Ramachandra:) O descendent of Raghu! Having anointed my two sons, I am determined to follow you.

न चान्यदत्र वक्तव्यं दुस्तरं तव शासनम् ।
त्यक्तुं नार्हसि मां वीर भक्तिमन्तं विशेषतः ॥१५॥

*na chaanyadatra vaktavyam dustaram tava shaasanam
tyaktum naarhasi maam veera bhaktimantam visheshatah.*

Nothing more can be said here about your command which is very difficult to transgress. Oh, brave one! You should not abandon me, especially when I am your devotee.

तस्य तां बुद्धिमक्लीबां विज्ञाय रघुनन्दनः ।
बाढमित्येव शत्रुघ्नं रामो वचनमब्रवीत् ॥१६॥

*tasya taam buddhimakleebaam vijnaaya raghunandanah
baadhamityeva shatrughnam raamo vachanamabraveet.*

Knowing that strong desire of Shatrughna, Ramachandra said to him: 'May it be so.'

तस्य वाक्यस्य वाक्यान्ते वानराः कामरूपिणः ।
ऋक्षराक्षससङ्घाश्च समापेतुरनेकशः ॥१७॥

*tasya vaakyasya vaakyaante vaanaraah kaamaroopinah
riksharaakshasasanghaashcha samaapeturanekashah.*

As Ramachandra finished his sentence, the monkeys, capable of changing their form at their will, the army of bears and rakshasas (demons) arrived there in large numbers.



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Central Bhavan, Mumbai

Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar

Shri Niranjana Mehta (Kala Kendra) has been honoured by Maharashtra State Gujarati Sahitya Academy with the 'Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar' (Lifetime Achievement Award) for his contribution in the field of Arts. The Award includes a citation and an amount of Rs. 1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh).



Online Lecture

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan paid homage to its Founder-President Kulapati Dr. K.M. Munshi on his 137th birth anniversary on December 30, 2024. On this occasion, the *Parayana* of Vedic hymns was performed by the staff-members of Bhavan's P.G. and Research Dept. and Sanskrit Exam.



Depts., and an online lecture (in Hindi) on the 'Importance of Sanskrit learning for the different dimensions of human-life' was delivered by Dr. Madhusudan Vyas, Professor and Head of Sanskrit Dept., Shri K.R. Katara Arts College, Shamlaji, Gujarat, at the Central Bhavan.

Book Talk

Bhavan's Munshi Saraswati Mandir Granthagar has initiated a new series of programmes called 'Pages & Perspectives—A Readers' Retreat'. Under this series, programmes like book



talks, discussions, contests, and other similar activities will be held to interest and engage readers.

The first event of the Series was organised on February 28, 2025, at the Bhavan's Library. The author Shri Salil Tripathi talked about his latest book *The Gujaratis: A Portrait of a Community* along with

Shri Prabodh Parikh. Around fifty people attended the event.

Shri Salil Tripathi explained the idea and inspiration behind writing this book. He talked about the known and not-so-well-known traits of the Gujarati community by quoting various anecdotes from his wide range of experiences.

Bhavan's A. H. Wadia High School

◆ K. P. West Ward level, Science Exhibition and Sahashaleya competitions:

The school has bagged 13 Prizes at the Inter-School Science Exhibition and Sahashaleya competitions organised by the Education Department for K/P West Ward schools.

Sahashaleya Inter-school Competitions

CATEGORY		PRIZE
Band Competition		1st
Mono Acting [Junior Category]	Vani Chauhan	1st
Mono Acting [Senior Category]	Apoorva Salunke	Consolation
Elocution Competition [Junior Category]	Afsheen Shaikh	1st
Elocution Competition [Senior Category]	Sara Solanki	Consolation
Elocution Competition [Teachers' Category]	Mansha Samant	3rd
Instrumental Music	Ovi Padlekar	2nd
Group Singing Competition		3rd
Folk Dance [Junior Category]		3rd

Inter-school Science Exhibition

CATEGORY	PRIZE
Science Project [Senior Group]	1st
Science Project [Junior Group]	3rd
Science Club	3rd
Science Quiz [Junior Group]	3rd

- ◆ At the Aagaaz Fest 2024 organised by K. H. M. W. Junior College of Science and Commerce, the school won the Best School Trophy for bagging maximum prizes in the events.
- ◆ The students from Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Sections participated in the Chinmaya Geeta Fest 2024 on the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, organised by Chinmaya Mission Mumbai. Out of the 36 participants, 13 students won prizes. The school was awarded

The prize-winning students are:	
Name of the Students	Prize
Pre-primary	
Viraja Phalke	1st
Arush Mishra	2nd
Neal Gore	3rd
Granth Tandel	Consolation
Krishika Chavan	Consolation
Shanaya Shinde	Consolation
Primary	
Sarwad Mathur	1st
Saisha Chipkar	3rd
Shreeya Sutar	Consolation
Anora Kamble	Consolation
Takshvi Bagayatkar	Consolation
Secondary	
Shambhavi Budha	3rd
Naivedya Joshi	Consolation

the Best School Trophy in the competition, highlighting the collective excellence of the students.

- ◆ At the XXI Mumbai Interschool Sports Kudo Tournament organised by Nippon Budo Sogo International India, the students clinched 6 Gold, 9 Silver and 23 Bronze Medals in the kicks and squats categories, earning an impressive Third Place overall. Additionally, Mast. Abdul Ahad Chaudhary of Std. 4 won a cycle in the lucky draw contest.
- ◆ A support staff member, Mrs. Priyanka Pawar, won the 1st Prize in the Inter-School Free-hand Rangoli Design Competition organised by the Education Department, K. West Ward.
- ◆ An Administrative staff member, Mrs. Rutali Deolekar, won the Consolation Prize in the Inter-School Games Competition, organised by the Education Department, K. West Ward.
- ◆ Mast. Aarush Pawar from Std. 10 secured the 3rd prize in the Peace Poster Contest organised by the Mohalla Committee Movement Trust. The contest was based on the theme of

Communal Harmony and National Integration.

- ◆ Miss. Prisha Nimbolkar of Std. 7 bagged two Bronze Medals in XXI Mumbai Interschool Sports Kudo Tournament, in the Kumite and Kata event, for the Girls under 13 Category, organised by Nippon Budo Sogo International India.
- ◆ At the Artistic Gymnastics event organised by the Body Mind Rhythm Academy at the Andheri Sports Complex, the following students bagged prizes:

- ◆ Miss Anaya Pillai of Std. 3, representing Level 1, displayed exceptional skill and secured the First Place in the Vaulting Table event.
- ◆ Mast. Samarth Rane of Std. 3, also represented Level 1 and achieved remarkable success by winning the First Place in Horizontal Bar and Pommel Horse. He also secured the Second Place in Parallel Bars, Vaulting Table and the All-Round event.

Navi Mumbai Kendra

Iyengar Yoga

Navi Mumbai Kendra's Children's Club organised an Iyengar Yoga session on December 22, 2024, for its members. The children came armed with yoga

mats, water bottles, and laden with enthusiasm and energy. They eagerly listened to the Yoga Teacher Mehul, observed his poses and followed them.



Art Exhibition

Ten Children's Club members held an Art exhibition with My Retired Life senior citizens on December 14, where lovely paintings and drawings, sketches, pour paintings and

woodworks rubbed shoulders with photographs and other art work. Around 22 artists participated in the four-hour long exhibition. The response was very good and more than 250 art lovers visited it.

Tirupati Kendra

World Meditation Day

Bhavan's Sri Venkateshwara Vidyalaya, Tirupati, celebrated World Meditation Day with great enthusiasm and reverence, emphasising the transformative benefits of meditation for mental and physical health. This year's theme, 'Inner Peace, Global Harmony', resonated throughout the event, fostering a spirit of unity and mindfulness.

The programme commenced with the Bhavan's prayer and the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the Chief Guest Sri Munikoti Lakshmana Murthy, Retired Income Tax Officer and Founder of

Prabhakara Mitra Trust; Special Guest Sri M. Devendranatha Reddy, SMC Member and Retired Superintendent Engineer, APSPDCL; the Guest of Honour Sri Venu Gopal, Retired Principal, Kendriya Vidyalaya, and Dr. N. Satyanarayana Raju, Hon. Director and Treasurer of Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Tirupati Kendra.

Sri Venu Gopal praised Bhavan's for integrating Yoga with academics. Sri Munikoti Lakshmana Murthy engaged the students in a brief meditation session, demonstrating its calming effects. Sri M. Devendranatha



Reddy encouraged students to embrace meditation for academic excellence and holistic

development, and stressed the importance of balancing education and mindfulness for a bright future.

National Mathematics Day



On December 23, 2024, Bhavan's Sri Venkateshwara Vidyalaya, Tirupati, celebrated National Mathematics Day with great fervour to commemorate the Birth Anniversary of the legendary mathematician, Srinivasa Ramanujan.

The school's Math Club, Mathemagika, organised an array of activities, including competitions, cultural programmes and exhibitions. Students presented innovative models and exhibits,

showcasing complex mathematical concepts such as geometric theories, Pythagorean principles, and 2D and 3D models. Among these, the Sri Chakra Model, crafted by senior secondary students, garnered special appreciation. The event concluded with a felicitation ceremony for Dr N. Satyanarayana Raju by the Maths Department, leaving students and parents inspired by the spirit of mathematics and innovation.

Chandigarh Kendra

Poster-making Competition



Bhavini, a student of Std. 7, achieved remarkable success at the State-level poster-making competition organised by BBMB, securing the 3rd prize and a cash award of Rs. 22,000. She also qualified for the National-Level competition, wherein she received an Appreciation Award, a tablet along with Rs. 15,000 from the honourable Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Indian National Mathematical Olympiad



Sidak Gulati and Abhinav Khetan of Std. 11, Aarush Singhal of Std. 11, Adhvik Sood of Std. 10, and Mandar Kasulkar of Std. 10 achieved a remarkable feat by qualifying for the prestigious Indian National Mathematical Olympiad showcasing their exceptional mathematical prowess.

Zonal Informatics Olympiad

Abhinav Khetan and Tanmay Nath Jha of Std. 11 and Mandar Kasulkar of Std. 10 achieved a notable milestone by qualifying for the esteemed Zonal Informatics Olympiad. It is a testament to their expertise in computing and informatics.

Strong Children's Festival 2024

Tarushi Gaur of Std. 10 was felicitated by the Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR) for her exceptional sports achievements at the Strong Children's Festival 2024 State Award Ceremony. She received the honour from the Director of Education, Sh. H.S. Brar, and Chairperson, Ms. Shipra Bansal.



Christmas with Special Cell Students

The Special Cell students experienced the joy of Christmas, thanks to a heartwarming collaboration with the Inner Wheel

Club, a unit of Rotary International Chandigarh. The festive celebration was filled with yummy delights, dance, laughter and cheer.

Asian Chess Championship

Vedika Pal (Std. 6) won the Gold Medal for India at the Asian Chess Championship held at Thailand from December 1 to 9, 2024. She won the title 'Asian Chess Champion' for the third time.



National Level Swimming



Krishnaditya Singh of Std. 11 clinched a Silver Medal at the SGFI National Swimming Championship, adding to the school's legacy of excellence in aquatic sports.

All India National Karate Championship



Desna Kabra represented the Bhavan Vidyashram Karate Team and achieved a remarkable feat by winning two gold medals at two events, Kata and Kumite, at the prestigious All India National Karate Championship.



Praniti Singh Choudhary of Std. 10 won a Bronze Medal in the 400 metre Freestyle as well as in the 200-metre Freestyle at the 68th National School Games. She is the first swimmer from the school to win two medals at a National Championship, setting a remarkable benchmark for aspiring swimmers.

National Ranking Competitions



Tushar Ramchandani won a Gold Medal at the U-15 Team Event and a Bronze Medal at the U-15 Individual Event at the National ranking competitions.

Tennis Premier League



Kushagra Jangid of Std. 7 secured the 2nd position in the Under 12 and Under 14 categories at the Tennis Premier League.

Dr. Kiran Bedi Inspires Future Innovators

Students of Vidyashram, Pratap Nagar, made their mark at the National Innovation Competition held at PIET College, Panipat. The journey began with an online preliminary round where over 1,000 teams showcased their innovative ideas. From this, four of our school teams were shortlisted to compete in the on-site finals.

In the final event, one of our teams clinched the top position with their ingenious project, the Taser Shoe—a ground-breaking innovation designed for women's safety. Another team earned a well-deserved consolation prize, reflecting the creativity and dedication of our young innovators.

The competition was graced by the inspiring presence of



Dr. Kiran Bedi, India's First IPS officer. She encouraged participants to think big, solve smart, and

present boldly, leaving an indelible mark on all who attended the event.

Carnival Fiesta 2.0



Bhavan Vidyashram, Pratap Nagar, hosted the much-anticipated Carnival Fiesta 2.0 – 2024 on December 24 last year. The event was a lively amalgamation of entertainment, creativity and community spirit, drawing a vibrant crowd of students, parents, alumni and members of the local community.

The carnival was inaugurated by Dr. Soumya Gurjar, Honorable Mayor of the Greater Municipal

Corporation, who commended the school for fostering such a spirited and inclusive event.

The event featured an array of engaging activities including exciting games with prizes, thrilling amusement rides, and a tattoo-making station that proved to be a hit with attendees of all ages. Another charm was a stall by the volunteer organization Umang, which showcased exquisite crafts made by specially-abled individuals.

Hinganghat Kendra

Annual Day

Bhavan's Girdhardas Mohota Vidya Mandir (GVM) recently celebrated its Annual Day, 'Merriment', with a dazzling display of talent and a vibrant atmosphere. The event was graced by the

esteemed presence of Shri Jagdish Lakhani, Executive Secretary of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, as the Chief Guest; Smt. Premlataji Mohota, Chairperson of SMC Bhavan's GVM, as the Guest of



Honour; Shri Basant Kumarji Mohota, Chairman, Hinganghat Kendra; Dr. Ashish Kumar Sarkar, Director of Hinganghat Kendra; Shri Brajratnaji Bhattad, Secretary of Hinganghat Kendra, and the Principal Smt. Dharati Tamgire.

The evening showcased the diverse talents of the students through a captivating array of performances, including mesmerising dance routines,

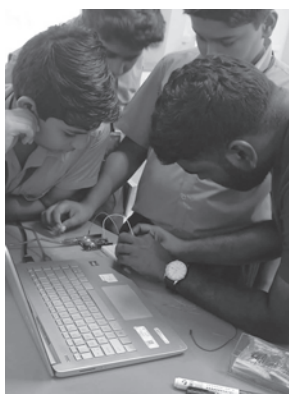
melodious musical renditions, and thought-provoking skits.

On this occasion, students were awarded, including Saumya Chandankhede with the Pranal Devkaran Nanji Award, Kumari Dnyanada Bonde for PPT presentation at CMS Lucknow, Swara Mude for the Junior Scientist Award, and Yatharth Janaikar for the first prize and Tanishk Dhomne for the second prize at VNIT Ideathon.

Pathanamthitta Kendra

ATL Lab Training Session

Bhavan's Vidya Mandir, Pathanamthitta Kendra, hosted an engaging ATL Lab training session on December 7, 2024. This hands-on training programme, conducted by Mr. Nirnanjan, aimed to inspire young minds and cultivate essential skills in science, technology, engineering and



mathematics (STEM). Students participated in interactive activities, exploring the fundamentals of STEM and developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Mr. Nirnanjan's expertise and engaging teaching style ensured an immersive learning experience.

National Colloquium



The National Colloquium of Intellectuals and Think Tanks of India was held in Hyderabad from November 22 to 24, 2024. Honorable Secretary Sri P I Sherief Mohammad from Bhavan's Vidya Mandir, Pathanamthitta, attended

the event, which was inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu. The colloquium fostered intellectual discussions, knowledge sharing, and nation-building among esteemed dignitaries and think tanks.

Montage Art Exhibition

Bhavan's Vidya Mandir, Pathanamthitta, has achieved a remarkable feat by getting selected to participate in the esteemed Montage Art Exhibition, organised by Kochi Global International School. The exhibition, held at David Hall, Fort Kochi, from December 17 to 20, 2024, showcased collaborative artworks from 30 chosen schools across Kerala.

The school takes immense pride in featuring the outstanding work of its students, Darshana Girish



and Devananda, whose painting 'Silent Scream' demonstrated exceptional creativity and talent. This achievement is a testament to the school's commitment to nurturing artistic excellence and providing opportunities for its students to shine.

Visakhapatnam Kendra

Miyawaki Story Time



Bhavan's Public School, in collaboration with Visakhapatnam Public Library, organised Miyawaki Story Time on December 22, 2024, at the Visakhapatnam Public Library. The session was led by the

eminent and certified storyteller, R. Varalakshmi.

The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of about 60 children from various schools across the city.

Christmas Celebration



The premises of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Public School, Visakhapatnam, came alive with festive cheer on December 24, 2024, as Christmas was celebrated with vibrant red and white

decorations. Children sang melodious Christmas carols, and the significance of the festival as a time of spreading peace, joy, and harmony, was highlighted during the programme.

Roller Skating Championships

Students of Bhavan's Public School, Visakhapatnam, achieved an amazing feat at the national level during the 62nd National Roller Skating Championships 2024. The event, organised by the Roller Skating Federation of India, was held in Coimbatore, Bengaluru.

G. Varshini, competing in the 7-9 age group, won a Gold Medal in Free Style Skating and a Bronze Medal in Figure Skating.

G. Harshini, from the 5-7 age group, secured a Bronze Medal in Solo Dance Skating. Their



remarkable achievements have brought laurels to the school, showcasing their exceptional talent, hard work, and dedication on a national platform.

Virtual Reality Show

On January 3, 2024, Bhavan's Public School, Visakhapatnam, hosted an engaging and educational Virtual Reality (VR) Show for its students. The 25-minute long immersive experience utilised advanced VR equipment to present complex concepts in an innovative and interactive manner. The show covered a wide range of topics, including science, social studies, space exploration, and global landmarks—all brought to life through 3D visualisation. It proved to be a transformative learning experience, leaving students amazed



and eager to delve deeper into the subjects they explored.

Storytelling Session

Bhavan's Public School organised a captivating storytelling session at Visakhapatnam Public Library. It was led by Mrs. Sree Karuna, the founder of 'Chandamama Kathaa', who enthralled the children with engaging stories and creative props.

The storytelling session was thoroughly enjoyed by all participants, as it combined learning with entertainment,



leaving the children with valuable life lessons and an appreciation for traditional tales.

Bhubaneswar Kendra

Deans and Directors' Round Table

The Eastern Region Round Table of Deans and Directors was conducted by Bhavan's Centre for Communication and Management

(BCCM), Bhubaneswar, on behalf of AIMS Bhubaneswar Chapter on the topic 'Accreditation, Quality Assurance and Future of Business



Education' at Mayfair Hotel, Bhubaneswar. The Round Table Conference witnessed discussions and deliberations by eminent academic experts nationwide.

The programme was inaugurated by the Honourable Vice Chairman of Odisha State Higher Education Council (OSHEC), Prof. (Dr) Ashok Kumar Dash as the Chief Guest, Mr Sudhir Sharma, President of AIMS, and Lt Gen JK Mohanty, PVSM, UYSM, SM, VSM (Veteran), Chairman of Bhavan's Centre for Communication and Management, as Special Guests. Prof. (Dr) Amiya Kumar Rath, Vice Chancellor of Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT); Prof. (Dr) B.B. Mishra, Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University, and Prof. (Dr) P. P. Mathur, Vice Chancellor of Birla Global University, were the Guests of

Honour. Prof. (Dr) M. Ramamohan Rao, the Past President of AIMS and Former Director of IIM, Bangalore, was the keynote speaker. Prof. (Dr) Sujata Mangaraj, Past President of AIMS and Sr. Director cum Dean (Academics) of Bhavan's Centre for Communication and Management, delivered the welcome address as the Convener of the Round Table.

Focusing on the accreditation standards and evaluation process, the Round Table Conference provided the knowledge to face challenges experienced by the Management Institutions in the Accreditation Processes. More than 200 Deans, Directors and Faculty Members across 50 plus Business Schools of the country participated in the programme.

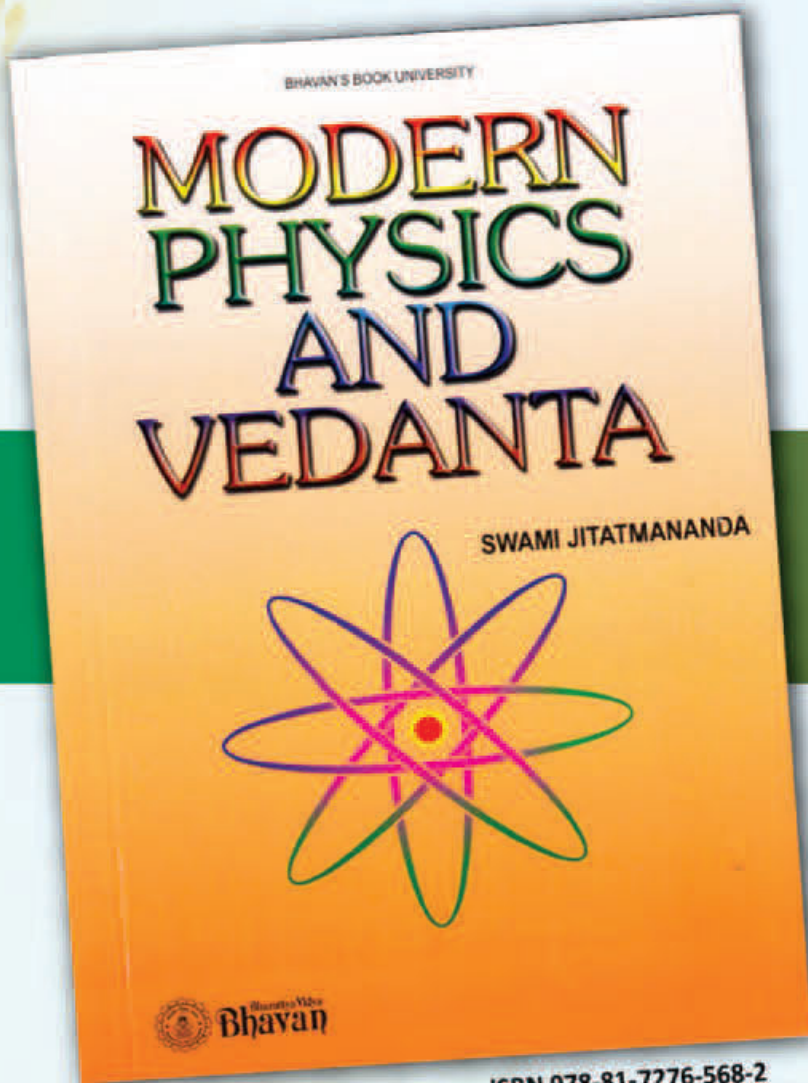
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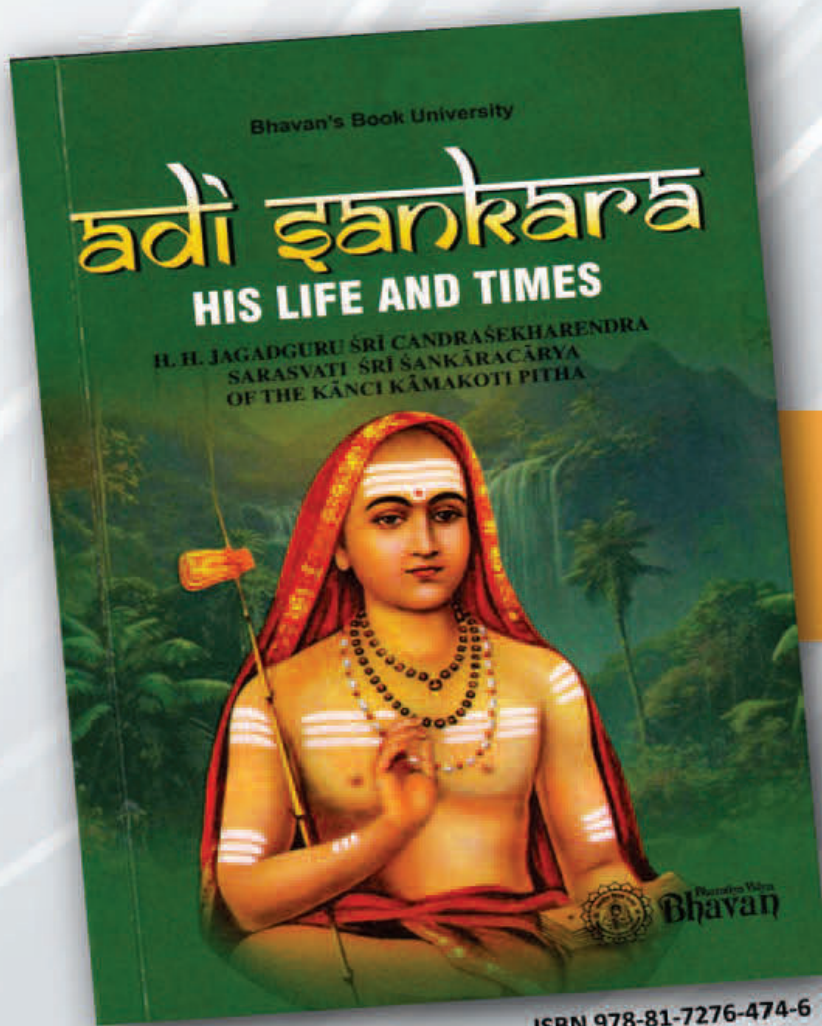
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